

 ISSUE 02
JULY 2020

The Journal of African Youth Literature



THE JOURNAL OF AFRICAN YOUTH LITERATURE

PRESERVING AFRICAN YOUTH IDENTITIES

The Journal of African Youth Literature (Jay Lit) is a non-profit initiative providing African youths with a platform to publish their writing. We also publish writing by other individuals that falls under the general theme of African youth. We publish creative writing from across the African continent from Algeria to Zambia, and in all African languages from Amharic to Zulu and everything in between! Submissions for the third issue open on 1 August 2020. Please consult the author guidelines on the website carefully before submitting.

On the cover

Photo by Louise Bruwer
Matthew Stuurman and Kathleen Stephens
in a scene from *Like Hamlet*
a play by Andi Colombo

Editorial and Production

Managing Editor, Marketing
and Social Media
Bronwyn King

Youth Liaison
Kelly Maroon

Africa Talent Recruitment
Ibrahim Babatunde Ibrahim

Strategy and Governance
Sandesh Baiju

Graphic Design
Bronwyn King and Jo-Anne King

Peer Reviewers

Sincerest thanks to the following for giving
of their time to help with quality control
and in making some tough calls:

Ibrahim Babatunde Ibrahim
Jacinta Moetlo
Lwandile Ngendane
Molebogeng Segole
Niall Hurley
Sibongile Panashe Tapfuma

Contact

Cell: +27 72 894 7191

Email: africanyouthliterature@gmail.com

Website: africanyouthliterature.art.blog

Facebook/Instagram: @journalofafricanyouthlit

Twitter: @JayLiterature

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

For this issue, I received some odd submissions. One was a collection from a person from a 'developed' nation (unconvinced of this 'developed' notion, but you get the idea). It was well-intentioned, but we must make it clear what this Journal is for: preserving African youth identities *as they are*.

We are not interested in sermons on how African youths ought to comport themselves. We are interested in what youths want to tell us through their creative works rather than what they 'should' be told. We also welcome encouraging, positive pieces that speak to current youth concerns in creative ways. Please talk to us, not at us.

We encouraged more submissions around the theme of *African masculinities* this year and we were thrilled by the response. There are good reasons why women's and girl's issues are getting increasing attention, and that must continue, but we do not want to forget about our African boys and men. Often they are needlessly pre-judged and treated with suspicion.

There exists a multitude of expressions of masculinities in Africa and so much more to each human life than may be given credit for. What we need are partnerships between us. We have been hopping around on one leg for too long by excluding women and girls, but with both legs – and we do need both – we will run.

With this issue, we would thus like to recognise and honour our young African gents with the poetry of seven of them, including **Azania Mbava**, **Blessings Chagunda**, **Emmanuel Nyerere**, **Haggai Imbiaka**, **Jailson Borges Da Veiga**, **Kobina Duncan**, and **Martin Chrispine Juwa**.

We include two short stories presenting different aspects and experiences of African boyhood and young manhood in the unique and authentic narratives of **Sandile Ngubane** and **Senzelokuhle Mpumelelo Nkabini**.

We are pleased to present to you a number of pieces dealing with sexuality and gender among African youths. This includes the powerful poetry of **Florence /Khaxas**, complemented by the artwork of **Wynona Mutisi**, and a mesmerising short story by **Ito Bassey**.

We feature poetry with feminist themes and on current women's and girl's concerns by **Imogene Mist**, **Khanyisile Moropa**, **Sumaiya Vawda**, and **Uma Thandeka Muhwati**, as well as **Alice Jossy Kyobutungi Tumwesigye's** touching youth-themed collection. **Zimkitha Mpatheni's** diverse poetry collection deals with humanist themes, aesthetics, and political views.

We are always overjoyed to receive literature in African languages. We are thrilled to present **Sibongile Panashe Tapfuma's** collection, which includes a poem in Setswana, and the poetry of **Jailson Borges Da Veiga**, which includes poems in Kriolu (Cape Verdean Creole) as well as Portuguese.

The script of the hilarious Zulu comedy *Babazile!* by **Aphiwe Namba** here incorporates an English translation by the author. We also present *Like Hamlet*, a postmodern, poetic interpretation of Shakespeare's play by theatre practitioner **Andi Colombo**. The photograph by **Louise Bruwer** featured on the front cover of this issue is a scene from *Like Hamlet*.

Issue two includes new translations of a short story by **J.F. Karwemera** from Runyankore-Rukiga into both English and French by **Agatha Tumwine**.

We would love to see more literature that is not in English, more translations, and submissions from a greater variety of African nations. Issue one presented creative works from seven different nations, including the DRC, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe. For this issue, we add **Cape Verde**, **Kenya**, **Namibia**, and **Uganda** to the list, taking our total to eleven African nations.

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We hope the number of countries represented continues to increase in future issues. Contributors from all nations on the African continent and island states which fall under the African Union are welcome to submit.

Stay well and stay safe!

Bronwyn King

Jay Lit Managing Editor

africanyouthliterature@gmail.com



Join our Ambassador Programme

Would you be interested in helping us promote the Journal to other authors from your home country? If you want to see your country and home language represented in the Journal, being an Ambassador is a great way to make it happen! We want to address the following through this initiative:

- We currently receive fewer **submissions from non-South Africans**, especially from nations **outside Sub-Saharan Africa**. We are determined to change that and are seeking ways to reach other African writers. You can start simply by telling your friends on social media about the Journal.
- We want more **submissions that aren't in English**, though we welcome those too. Perhaps you can help us reach those who are writing or could write in languages such as Swahili, Chichewa, Zulu, etc. All African languages are welcome as well as those spoken widely in certain regions such as French and Portuguese.
- We are also interested in the way youths mix and use various languages together in practice (**multi-lingualism**) and capturing that for **cultural preservation**.
- Another major challenge we face is **reaching rural areas**. Can you reach out to those in outlying areas in your country or region? Sharing info about *Jay Lit* with high schools, teachers, libraries, community forums, etc. in rural areas can ensure we are more inclusive and give opportunities to those in disadvantaged areas.

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Poetry

Sumaiya Vawda



Sumaiya Vawda is a 20-year-old female studying accounting at Rhodes University, with hopes of exploring various fields. Her poems have appeared in issues of Poetry Potion and English Alive anthologies. She is a fan of Arsenal FC, climate change movements, and scrolling through Twitter. She consistently walks the tracks of social and existential questions and often loses her train of thought.

Sumaiya Vawda

I am She

I am She
who serves cereal for breakfast
and consciousness for lunch
so the youth have political banter on which to munch

I am She
who envisions a better world
while clad in PJs
and causes revolutions
in my Skechers,
which earn retribution

I am She
whose laughter swims against the tide,
enthraling the neighbouring village
until we share a common pride.

I am She
whose voice rattles the chambers of parliament
and emboldens others
to action

I am She
whose emotion lends longevity to art
and whose mind ignites
chaos in its interpretation

I am She
whose soul quakes
with love and laughter;
awaiting a lesson
in concealing the smile of my eyes

I am She
to whom the world may be unfair
but still I give to it my heart
labelled: 'Fragile, Handle with Care'

I am She:
the raindrop clinging to the petals of time.
Paint me lurid
with brushstrokes that rhyme.

I am She
who devours headlines by day
and sips on prose by night,
all while reeking
of piss and promise.

I am She
who quotes personal observation,
stays up with Shakespeare
and falls asleep next to a saint.

I am She
who packs away the moon
and sings to the sun
so that the world is not dun.

Emmanuel Nyerere



Emmanuel Nyerere is a Malawian currently living in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and studying Theology at St Joseph's Theological Institute. He considers himself a lover of art and literature though not one to produce any works, at least until most recently.

Emmanuel Nyerere

That Woman

When we rise above that cloud
And try to ponder
That which in many ways allowed us to look yonder
Down the hill that sways
The screaming streams
Streams that carry lives
Lives that ooze of hope
A hope that does not want to die,
We shall always remember
That it was you who put us there
Through thick and thin you drove us
With a love so tender; yet iron-strong
And gave us that which we always long:
A victory unmatched!
And it is for this reason
That we sing this song.

The Parable of the Lost Shepherd

He left us in the dark of yesterday's pains
And headed for the plains of future unknown
His staff on his right hand; his cloak dangling from
his shoulder

He wore the look of the one who knows
Knows the path that leads to hope
A hope stuffed with the abundance of gut's joys

So when he left we gathered the hens and the chicks
These rather unlikely remnants of the fold
And besought them for a hopeless peace
A peace so distant that it flickered doom
And raised anarchy amongst the dying ruins

Perplexed we mourned together
Together our two kinds: goats and chickens

Later we heard of far distant wailing
A kind of which has never been heard in these plains
Word had it a calamity had befallen our neighbours;
Gossipers bade us sing songs of our ironic redemption
For our loss's gain, theirs was a gathering of pain:
Of a shepherd on a journey of no return.

Emmanuel Nyerere

Chronicles of a Wretched Soul

It is the winds of ghastly ire that threw me there
Into the jaws of pain, the land of nowhere
To be purged, cleansed and stripped bare
Yes, to be reborn in the land of peace and warfare
To learn the language of the gods that held there
The keys of dark and light for those who care
For to them belonged life's lair.

Yet was I rejected; cast into the earth's crust
To sift the marrow of pain and die if I must
To breathe and smell the hallowing dust
Of the earth's torments that were there cast
By those justified to ruin and plunder the hearts
that last
Remain of joy, love, peace and trust
So that like them they'll also rust.

Then was I swept by that mighty tide
Into the depths that I thought I could hide
But I was engulfed by those that swam in pride
And vomited into the torrent's stride
Such was my pain like a lamb without a guide
For shepherds no longer provide
That which providence deems should abide.

So when the flame rose to consume me
No soul thought I could ever be
Yet infinite Reason ensured that I should see
That which mortal flesh can never see.
Of Darkness I know I'm not yet free
Pains and tribulations are on a shopping spree
However, mine are reasons that only Reason can be.

I Cry

How did I get into this dungeon?
A dungeon that smells of doom and despair
Despair not for my children for none I have
I have neither reasons nor sense to relate my state
A state that sculpts doubt within and provokes spite without
Without a name to trust and a body to call
A call embedded with pain prodigious enough
 to gallop through the vastness of the universe
A universe to which I owe no allegiance
Allegiance yet un-established; yet annoying
Annoying such as is a waste to cry

Cry, yes. Yet, still I cry.

Florence/Khaxas



Florence /Khaxas is a feminist activist and African storyteller. She the Director of the women's rights organisation called Y-Fem Namibia based in Swakopmund. She is a leadership coach and mentor for girls and young women leaders in rural communities. Florence is also a co-founder of Xoa Se Ra Women's Collective that aims at facilitating the process of inspiring Namibian women to use creative writing as a medium of healing and inspiration, and to strengthen the women's movement through creative expression and the documentation of women's lives.

Florence /Khaxas

Tales at the River

The river connects you to yourself as the
ancestors dance with you in celebration,
The tales the fools tell, you stepping
into power unbothered as they watch as the water softly tackles you at your angle
They wait for your defeat as the river opens
Her anger passed the test of apostle
caste calculated realities of the innocence blindly held captivated by untruth
manifested by fear
The roads
Their illusion tames her fire
Eyes wide open

Your river people have arrived daughter
She is not alone in this twisted whip of thoughts
The ancient smoke as they flee like wildfire purifies her space
Her smile is genuine, her feet channelling her roots within
Double-check the door, leave the dirt by the door, stand by the stoep
Keep the pain and the heartache at the door
Clear your thoughts
The daughters can see it clearly now, with much sense to run in silence
Conqueror of adversity
The grandmothers left secrets at the river for the daughters to find when they are ready
Equity assertiveness, unshakable stubbornness, disobedience
Ma Khoen ta mi
Khoen ta mi te

Open wide the window, the shallow low energies should leave
Emotions and ancestors as the tears water seeds of success
The majestic trees of Tsumeb understand her sexuality
They shield her from the prophet that gaslights her to question her Bodily autonomy
The fundamentalists are reorganizing
Is it genuinely yours those thoughts that make you doubt yourself, daughter
The grandmothers left secrets at the rivers
The water is gone, only thing left is the whispers in the wind
That fills you up with gratitude.
She stretches her arms wide open almost to touch the universe
She held everything she needs and wants
within her palm
She smiles back at her chasing her worries out of the window
Khoen, Tikhoen, I am better today

Yesterday I was numbed by capitalist expectations
Black tax and black queer Bodies
Entangled hopelessness of unemployment
Stuck with hope to break free, not realizing that she is
The wildest presentation of autonomy
Her grandmother never imagined
The angelic whisper of her grandmother through the wind
The river dance expresses the spirit in a physical form
She is moulding herself back to freedom
She wears her pleasure as red as her thong laced up with confidence
She belongs to herself, holding herself accountable to her destiny
She minds her thoughts, fulfilled by the joy of the moment
Her Africa is returning within herself



Florence /Khaxas

She has never experienced love as divine
As her tears moulding her back to herself to growth and resilience
The resilience of a black lesbian
Whose dirty laundry hangs in the archives of
Cultural silencing of inequitable gender norms as
Her mental health hangs between self-harm and unheard
Whispers of her grandmothers

Grandmothers keep dancing in her dreams
Leading her to the river she once had forgotten
They don't discriminate
Clapping their worn hands to the dominance of the spirit of their daughter

You are not here for them to understand you
Generations of your mothers, grandmothers, scaling up from
1936, 1957, 1989, 2000, 2020
Same spirit
Different lifetimes
Travelling beyond the limitation of time
Transferring knowledge of grandmothers through the wind
Erongo Mountains remain the same
As firm as your faith
As the seasons weather.

Notes

- 1 Khoekhoe: Mother, people are throwing words at me / People are throwing words at me
- 2 People, My people

Wynona Mutisi



Wynona Mutisi is a fourth-year fine arts student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. She is a keen and passionate creative currently exploring sites of meaning within her professional practice. She uses the contestation between fine and commercial art practice to inform her work within and outside the academic sphere. Out of this grew her freelance graphic design and illustration business, Wild, Wise Wynona. Her freelance work focuses on producing commercial art, while her academic work strips it of its function as a service to become objects of contemplation and sites of meaning. Wynona's portfolio can be viewed at wvmutisi.myportfolio.com or behance.net/wynonamutisi. Her Instagram handle is @wynona.art



Wynona Mutisi

The grandmothers left secrets at the river for the daughters to find when they are ready
Florence /Khaxas



Wynona Mutisi

Is it genuinely yours those thoughts that make you doubt yourself, daughter
Florence /Khaxas



Wynona Mutisi

*She stretches her arms wide open almost to touch the universe
She held everything she needs and wants within her palm
She smiles back at her chasing her worries out of the window
Florence /Khaxas*



Wynona Mutisi

*She is moulding herself back to freedom
She wears her pleasure as red as her thong laced up with confidence
She belongs to herself, holding herself accountable to her destiny
Florence /Khaxas*



Wynona Mutisi

*You are not here for them to understand you
Generations of your mothers, grandmothers, scaling up from
1936, 1957, 1989, 2000, 2020
Same spirit
Different lifetimes
Travelling beyond the limitation of time
Florence /Khaxas*

Sibongile Panashe Tapfuma



Zimbabwean-born, South African-bred, 22-year-old Sibongile is an avid reader. Her love for reading was fuelled by her dad from a young age. She remembers her first poem rendition in primary school as exciting yet nerve wrecking. She started writing again in 2018. Among a myriad of writers, her favourites are Jackie Phamotse and Chimamanda Adichie. Sibongile is an adventurous alpha female. She is passionate about going against the odds, hence she decided to study electrical engineering. Despite engineering still being male-dominated, she believes she will leave her mark one day. Sibongile's poetry collection here portrays some of the sad realities faced by youths. She says, "Depression 'cuddles' with our youth because of deception and betrayal, often by loved ones. Not all are brave enough to survive the experience."

Sibongile Panashe Tapfuma

Deceit | Depression | Dyke

Morago ga bokhutlo

Gadima, leba kwano!
Gwantela kwano, ke
gwaladitse matlho ko bokhutlong.
Go ntshia ga gago e kete
go raya nonyane legodimo le e fofelang mo go lona ga le sa e batla.
Gona se se salang ke go fofela leano-tsietsona,
mo sera se e batlang teng.
Boitumelo!

E rile botlhe ba sia wa nna,
E rile ba re moremogolo go betlwa wa taola,
wa motho o a ipetla.
Wa re mabogo dinku a thibana.
E rile botlhokong ke nanya ekete ga ke a nyatsiwa.
E rile ba ntshega wa ntshegets!a!
E rile pelo e rotha madi e kete pula e nosetsa tšhese wa thiba thiba.
Manyaapelo tsala yame!

Gompieno boitumelo o tlile gae, o a ntshia!
Ke tla rwalelwa ke mang tlhako tse di nkimelang?

This original poem in Setswana is about embracing pain and making it your own until happiness finds its way back into your life.

Like the birds

Today like the birds welcoming a brand new day,
I sing myself out of a prison
A prison, I have held myself hostage,
My own cage.

I have held my breath more often than not,
I have hid my light under my arms so I would not make
anyone question their worth in my presence.
No race has ever been won with a head down,
no one has ever conquered an enemy they
could not look in the eye.

Keep smiling, you've been here before,
the wild dogs bit you time and again, but you survived!
Stop fearing your own magic,
stop giving yourself soundless claps.

Gloomy the days, dark the night or
tough the road today like the birds
welcoming a brand new day
I sing myself out of my prison.

Sibongile Panashe Tapfuma

When the sun goes down

The ravishing rays of the sunset with my pain,
hoping not a brighter day yearns so much to be
called upon by the clock lest it brings along its burdens.
I am a recluse because during the day
I am the rays' ransom finally free at
last when the sun goes down until it rises again,
I await to be sunstroke.
I witness the sun kiss the ground as
I kiss my day's trouble goodbye.

Lost in the dark visions of my mind
that will only make sense when the sun
goes down, throw me in the light!
I mean rescue me from the light because
I find comfort in darkness just as the sun lays to rest.
Let there be light, and I shall not be found.

I long for a horizon of new adventure that
awaits me when the sun goes down.
I long for the vivid visions I get in my sleep
awaiting to be put in place the next day just before
the sun goes up.

The shadows of the slowly dying sun vanishes with my sorrows.
Sorrows that made me mourn, watering the ground to
produce a fruit of hopelessness that awaits me to
shamelessly harvest it.

A sea of sorrow that welled inside me as
the sun goes down is done away with.
I long for dusk where peace resides,
and I gaze upon the day as it day dims my sorrows
welcoming the dark.
When the sun goes down.

Azania Mbava



Azania Mbava is a politics, philosophy and economics major at the University of Cape Town and was recently admitted to Emory University in Atlanta, USA. In the near future, he sees himself working for the United Nations. He lives for the decolonization of spaces and the mystic neon lights of the city at night. A writer and poet at heart, Azania advocates for nonconformity and strives to use writing as a means to discover new universal truths. His idols are Jean Michel Basquiat and Kanye West, and his favourite films include Mad Max: Fury Road, Moonlight, and Blade Runner: 2049.

Azania Mbava

ivory tower

the ivory tower fell
and the cries rang

ravenous beasts trashed the streets
evil men scoured every streetlight
women fled;
children bled

*but the little Nubian boy stared,
blank-faced and confused*

against the heat at the crimson blue sky
the angelic demon from the sun
descended and roared and roared
singing dante's lullaby to mad crowds

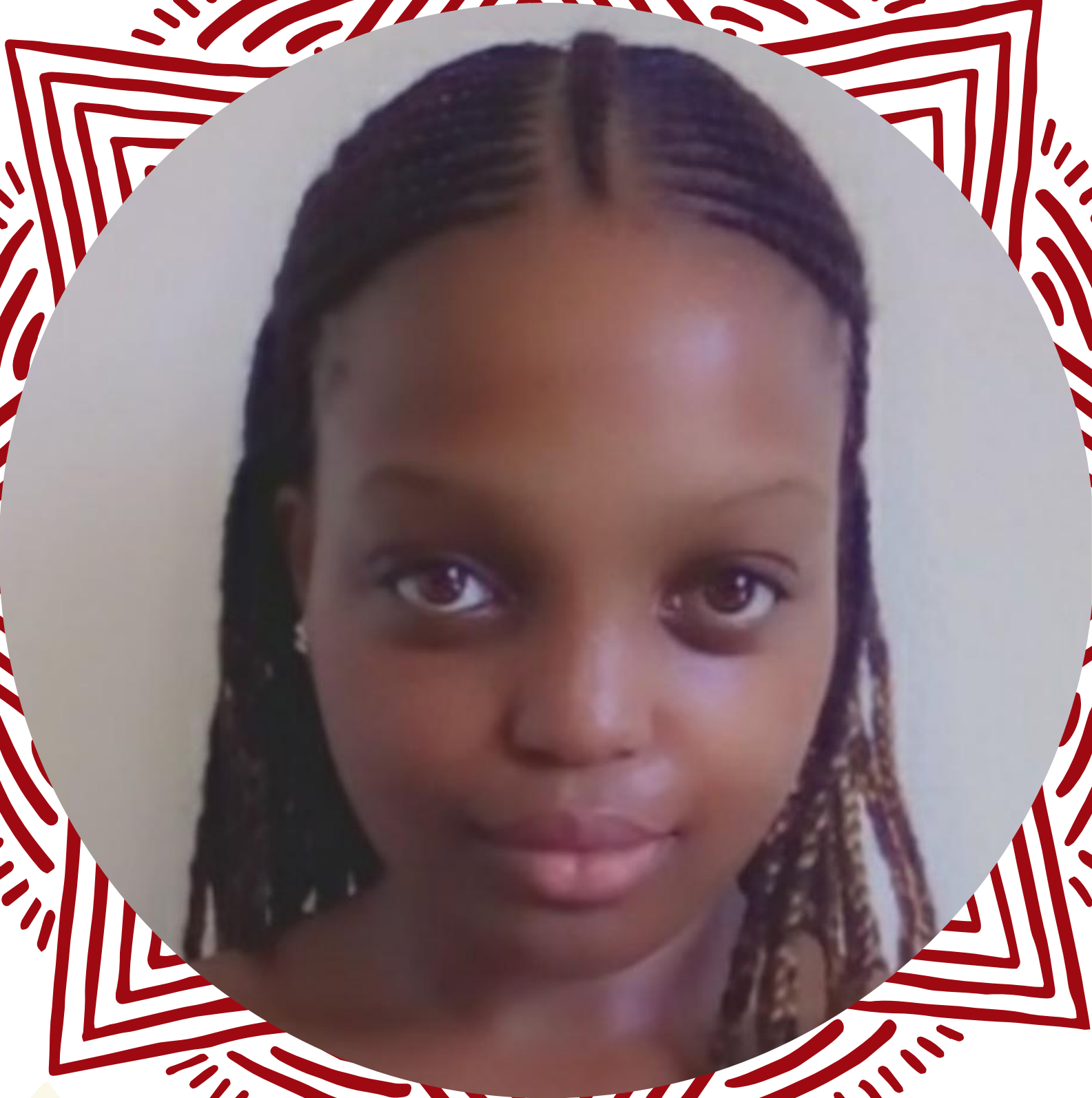
"why are they crying"

four walls of pride and sheltered wounds
fell,
four walls of history
(engulfed)
in pain and misery
fell

the little nubian boy remembered the lost souls martyrs at the hand of a gun and a bible

the ivory tower fell
and the little nubian boy felt
nothing

Khanyisile Moropa



Khanyisile Moropa is a second-year Bachelor of Health Sciences (Clinical Technology) student at the Tshwane University of Technology. She currently resides in Pretoria, South Africa but was raised in Tshepiso in Soweto. She has a great passion for writing, developed since Grade 9. She found herself rewriting lyrics while listening to rappers or singers on their song tracks. As a child growing up, she would also love watching Lokshin Bioskop movies, which seems to be where her passion for story writing also developed. Khanyisile prides herself in being goal- and achievement-oriented.

Khanyisile Moropa

Thixo’Unathi¹

Heaven has given birth to an angel.
A beautiful flower that was kept safe in the heaven’s womb.
Heaven has given us treasure.
A soul that is bold, smart and strong.
Heaven has given us a being, so kind
Yet so fragile.
A helper that has come to save us from the harshness of the reality
We face.

Her eyes glow when she looks towards the sun.
Her smile is the one thing that fills up our empty souls.
Her words are like
medicine to our broken hearts.
Her personality is that of a goddess.
Her name symbolizes just that.
A rare breed we call her.

She is the first thing we look forward to seeing when
We wake up.
And the last thing we wish to see before resting through the dark bulb-less night.
She wakes up every morning to make our lives
much better.
Something we have never had before.

She collects water for us
when our feet are too tired to walk.
She prepares meals and keeps us fed.
She brushes our hair and ties it in beautiful beaded bows.
Just like her name, a God is with us.
She is pure.
She is light.
She is our Moon.

Heaven has given birth
To an angel.
A gift that we will forever be grateful for

Note

¹ Zulu: God is with us

Zimkitha Mpatheni



Zimkitha Mpatheni is a South African from the heart of Stellenbosch. She grew up speaking three languages, and always had a deep appreciation for poetry and languages. She currently holds an MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL and has mostly travelled and taught in the Middle East. She has spent the last seven years in Iraq, where she teaches and engages with a Kurdish community. She has published poetry in the 2019 Sol Plaatje European Award Anthology and also for the American University English Journal. Her poetry reflects on African renaissance, nostalgia, and the ability to connect with mother nature spiritually and to question our behaviour as humans. Zimkitha hopes to influence South African poetry further in honour of the nation's diversity and unity.

Zimkitha Mpatheni

What if our skins were paper?

What if our skins were paper?
Would it be a marvellous canvas?
Priceless to the eye, a wonder that we once lived.
Would it be that the ink would finally sink in?
Leaking all over our blood and veins
So that no story and no trial is left in vain
Would we become books to each other?
But books without words,
Just alphabetical scars carrying our narratives
Protecting it just like it has never left our bones bare?
Would our lovers beg to be pens?
So that they cannot only write our romance, but to be it,
To soak it up, just like we soak up the sun
Every inch of who we are catching the sunbeam
Would our wrinkles be something we accept?
Something that we can laugh at, be proud of,
Something that adds in this lie of withering away.
Would our colours, our unmatchable pigmentation, be a symbol?
A symbol that, somehow, God is more creative than what we think?

Pre-emptive

South Africa I can't feel your pulse no more.
The heartbeat of your youth has been swallowed up
By those who choose to replace it with what they think best fits
Don't they know from your history that you can't be bent over?
Haven't they proven that you can't be fixed?
You have become a man who has skipped his youth.
You have grown up too quickly and now your shoes are more of a burden than a blessing.
The walk to freedom has become a detour to burning farms
The smoke still smell the same as Vlakplaas and you cry out
"Freedom!!!"
You have become a man who aged well before your time
There is no pot of gold for you by the end of your 27 years.
Let me repeat, there is no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow
For there is no rainbow to give a hope of sunshine
If we continue to storm upon ourselves
If we continue to not see us as "us"

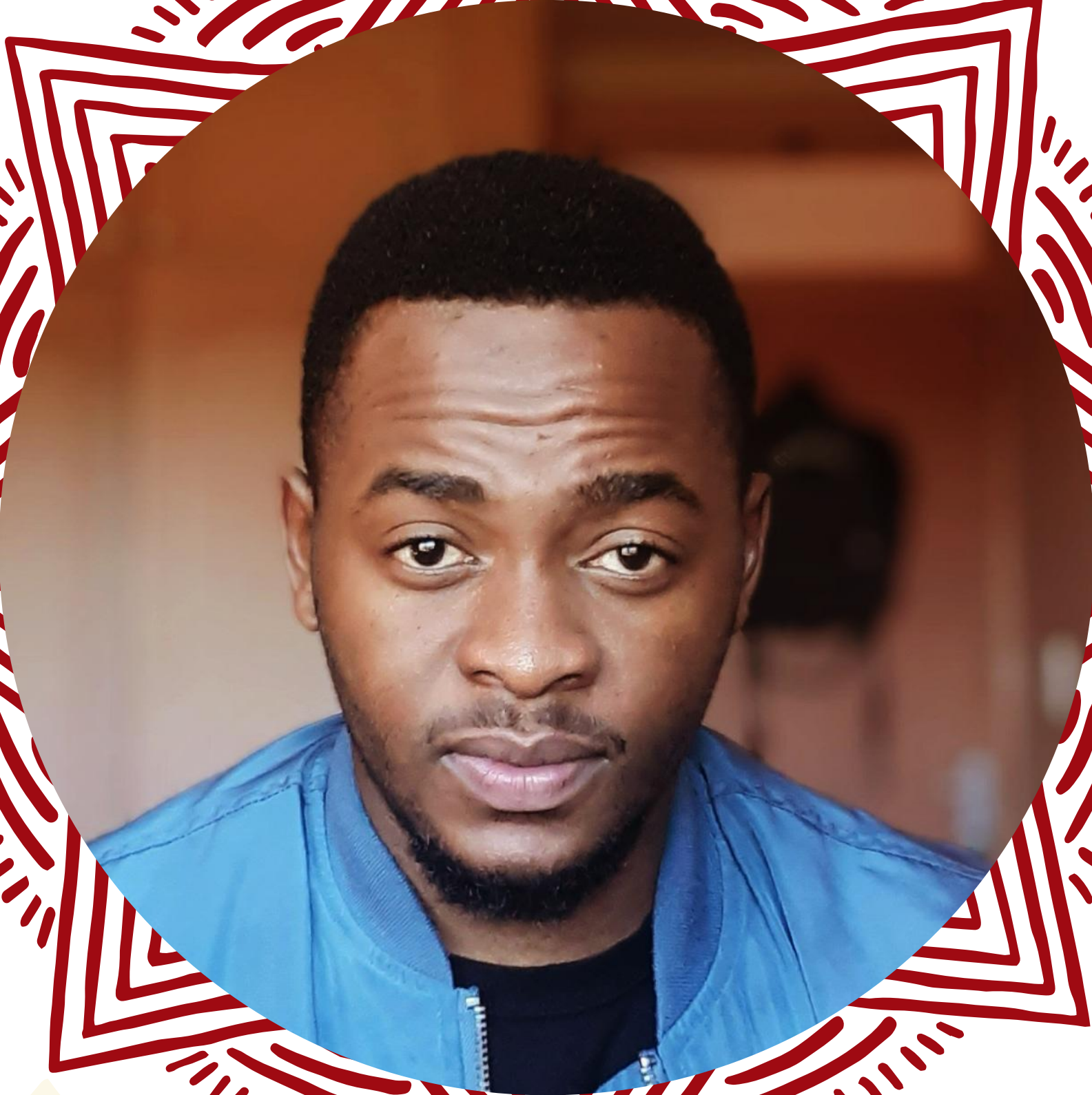
Madiba left his sunshine, 27 years, and a pot of gold behind for us
They weren't neatly packed in our skin colour
No, he left it out for us to enjoy its glorious blaze!
He left it behind when he said farewell right in front of our eyes
He left it behind for his human sake so that each of us become a pulse, beating together.

Zimkitha Mpatheni

I Have Seen Beauty

I have lived in its house and made myself at home
Its face really broke my heart
I was rejoicing with my tears for their release of freedom
It let me wear its crown
And my head enjoyed its weight, how weightless it felt.
I have seen beauty
It lets me bow down to a Creator
All of Earth grew from within me
And its sun rose straight from my bosom
I bowed down, and the moon kissed my feet
All of us were in energy, in synergy
Beauty kissed my face
And we became one; we won!

Blessings Chagunda



Blessings Patrick Chagunda is originally from Malawi but currently resides in South Africa and is pursuing his undergraduate studies in philosophy. As a student of philosophy, he says that he has come to appreciate and value the nature of the written word with its transformative power in contemporary African societies and its ability to help us realise our full potential in all facets of life. Through his passion for writing, Chagunda explains that he can articulate how cosmetic reality leads us to seek affirmation which actually prevents us from experiencing authentic living and from realising our full potential.

Blessings Chagunda

At the end of the day

At the end of the day
I am all alone
Tick-tocks louder than grenades
That's when reality takes charge

At the end of the day
I remove my glasses
And everything becomes blurry
A reminder of my nerve's fury

At the end of the day
I remove my masks
Going back to my element
A reminder that I only live to impress people

At the end of the day
The silence is overwhelming
For fear to face the void in my soul
A reminder of my superficiality

The other side

I wish I could tell you
The story of my life
Not that of strife
But that of confusion
In my quest for conclusions

I wish I could show you
The other side of my life
Full of emotions
Fragile and docile
In the face of love

I wish I could tell you
How much I care
With a soothing melody
A symphony
Written on my face

I wish I could show you
How to write my name
A synonym of euphony
An acronym of care
A middle name so rare

Blessings Chagunda

The sad reality

Living in an age of quick fixes
Everything so fast
Fast cars, fast food, fast money
Our ego always craving for more

Living in an age of superficiality
Consumed by the cosmetic reality
Echoes of emptiness so loud
Making an off-key rhythm of our soul

Living in an age of subjectivity
Where it's only the 'I' that matters
Constantly seeking affirmations
Gradually losing the self

Jailson Borges Da Veiga



Jailson is a 21-year-old student at the University of Santiago on the isle of Santiago in the chain of islands collectively known as Cabo Verde (Cape Verde). He is fluent in Portuguese, Kriolu and English and is in third-year English Studies. Jailson says poetry is his life, because it summarises his feelings and worldview. He has loved reading novels since a young age, and recently started writing more seriously. His focus is on creating motivational, reflective and romantic poetry. Jailson likes to say, "Dreaming is free, so why should we put limitations on our dreams?" He dreams of his books being read around the world and translated for a wider audience. He intends to study further abroad, to become a motivational speaker, and to open a school in Cape Verde.

Jailson Borges Da Veiga

Depreson É Ka Freskura

N xinti só, na meu di multidon,
Nha mundu bira total skuridon,
É txeu prisson,
N atxa na solidon, suluson pa nha situason,
Pega-n rixu na mon,

Fla-n ma tudu ta fika drétu,
Nada ka sta da sertu,
Mesmu ku tudu por pertu,
N sta xinti n'un dizertu,

Solidon brasa-n forti,
N ka tene más sorti,
N ka sabe si N ta bai pa sul ô pa Norti,
N ten ki kóri di morti,

Nhas dias sta sen kor,
Nha kurason karegadu di dor,
Nha vida ka tene más sabor,
N ka tene más amor,

Surizu abandona nha kára,
Logu mi ki senpri foi di gára,
N ka kre más inkára,
Nhas firidas ka sa ta sára,
Pa li N kre pára,

N tene medu,
Nha alma sta intristisedu,
Pa móri inda é sedu,

N ka ten kulpa di ser si,
És ka gosta pa N ser mi,
N ten ki sai di li,

N kre apenas un abrasu,
É pode muda nhas trasu,
É pode kontribui pa más un pasu,

N tenta ser pasienti,
És julga-n pamodi mi é diferenti,
És ka ta intende nha prizenti,

N ka ta dizabáfa, N ka sabe tra pa fóra,
Vontadi bai inbóra,
Ta agita-n tudu óra,

Melodia di un piánu,
Faze-n pensa na nhas planu,
Menus un góta na osianu,

Ningén ka ta inporta,
Ningén ka ta nota,
És ka muda forma di konporta,
N ka sa ta konsigi suporta,
N ka podi kontinua ta vive,

Jailson Borges Da Veiga

Diskulpa mamá,
Diskulpa papá,
N ka tive kulpa,

N tive ki da és saltu,
Nha sufrimentu fála más altu,

Keli é nha último suspiru,
Antis di N toma kel tiru,

N tenta poi un fin na nha amargura,
Depreson é ka freskura,
Freskura é bu opinion ipókrita.

The above poem and the following three are written in Kriolu, also known as Cape Verdean Creole, a Portuguese-based creole language spoken on the islands of Cape Verde. It is the most common language in the country, spoken by about nine hundred thousand people.

The theme of this poem is depression, which is among the major causes of ill health and death worldwide. The easiest thing to do is to judge others. We should not be fooled into thinking that depression is a ‘natural’ phenomenon; in reality, it is not. Depression is a very serious issue and needs attention from all of us. I believe that if we change our ways of facing depression, we can reduce the number of suicides resulting from this sad phenomenon.

Kriansa

Kriansa é aliansa,
konfiansa,
Speransa di nós País,
Raiz di sabedoria,

Kriansa é alegria,
Fantasia,
Magia di nós dia-a-dia,
Melodia pa nós dor,

Kriansa é flor,
Valor ki ta sinbuliza amor,
Sabor di vivênsia,

Kriansa é inteligênsia,
Prudênsia,
Isênsia di umanidadi,
Sinplisidadi pur naturéza,

Kriansa é puréza,
Rialéza,
Y sertéza di ki umildadi y solidariedadi ka ta déxa di izisti!

Kriansa é sínbulu di vida!!

This second poem, “Child”, highlights the unique and particular value that our precious children occupy in our lives. The child is a nation’s hope and a symbol of life’s precious value.

Jailson Borges Da Veiga

O mundo já não é o mesmo

O mundo já não é o mesmo,
A forma de demonstrar o amor já não é a mesma,
Abraçar quem amamos tornou-se num sinal de perigo,
Se a pessoa se afastar, é porque se trata de um amigo,

Ficar em casa tornou-se um ato de segurança,
Não existe mais confiança,
Porém, não podemos perder a esperança,

Atualmente vivemos presos no nosso lar,
Apenas queremos estar igual aos pássaros, livres a voar,
Viajar pelo mundo deixou de ser um sonho,
Tornou-se em algo bastante medonho,

Coronavírus!
Maldito coronavírus!
Trouxeste contigo muitas negatividades,
Viestes tomar as nossas preciosidades,

Ou digo, bendito coronavírus?
Ah! Por outro lado conseguiste unir famílias,
Em todos os continentes, países e em todas as ilhas,
Fizeste-nos refletir o significado da vida humana,
Fizeste-nos lembrar que nada somos e que do nada nos tornaremos em um “nada”,

Maldito coronavírus!
Desculpa-me mas, continuas sendo “MALDITO”
Este é o seu sobrenome,
Já chega!
O mundo já sofreu o suficiente,
A partir de hoje, prometemos ser diferentes,
Nós já aprendemos o essencial,
Prometemos ser cidadãos conscientes em nossas atitudes,
Já dominamos o ideal,

Podes ir embora,
Até já passou da hora,
Agora, dominamos os conceitos: acreditar, lutar e amar!
Não precisas mais voltar!!

This poem, “The word is no longer the same”, talks about the major problem facing humanity worldwide: coronavirus. This poem is about the suffering this pandemic has brought us, and the great lessons we have been learning from it, showing that we have to change our ways of living if we are to thrive in the future.

Jailson Borges Da Veiga

Sintimentu Oprimidu

Na komesu éra tudu mil maravilia,
Bu atrai-n ku bu sinpatia,
Bu pon apaixonada feito magia,
Bu-s tóki ta rifletiba na mi igual a poesia,
N ka konsigi persebe bu-s fantasia,

Alvez N ta fla ma mi é máz un ki ka devia nen ter nasidu,
Di tantu ki dja-n foi firidu,
Nha vida ka tene más sentidu,
N foi vítima di sintimentu oprimidu,
Y filisidadi finjidu,
N sta xinti perdidu, Lágrimas ta skore na nha rostú,
Nha vida karegadu disgostu,
Pa grandis fridas nha alma é konpustu,

Pior ki kéma na xáma,
É bai senpri pa káma,
Ku kenha ki nu dexe di áma,

Bu prometeba mi un vida di rainha,
Ma djuntu nu ta kaminha,

“Mês pasadu é bate na mi, más ok! Foi prumeru bez.
Simana pasadu é bati na mi outrabez, más foi nha culpa.
É volta a bati na mi à dias, más é rapende, é promete-n m’a ta ser último bez.
Oxi! Oxi é volta a bati na mi! Dês bez foi pior di tudu kes otus bez!
É maltrata-n é injuria-n, é mata-n y N kontinua bibu.
É po-n ku sikatriz na nha korpu.
Ah pior foi kel sikatriz ki N ta karega ku mi pa dentu pa tudu tenpu.”

N foi vítima di un rilasionamentu violentu,
Undi ki ka izisti afetu y nen sentimentu,
Será k’é mi ki ka é ninhun prinséza?
Ô mi é pior kriatura ki izisti na naturéza?

Afinal, bu usa máskara,
Bu faze-n apaixonada di kurason,
Ku tenpu bu dimostrason di amor pása ta ser a basi di agreson,
Nós rilasionamentu bira a basi di traison,
É txeu disepison,
Ultimamenti txora é nha maior okupason,
Pamodi ka ten otu soluson,

Na Sikuência di nós amor,
Violência bira rotina,
Bu Insistência en faze-n sufri,
Ku txeu frikuência,
Pior é ki ningén ka ta akredita na nha Inosência,

Na nha alma bu bate,
Pamodi amor ki N ten pa bo N ka konsigi parte,
Bu substitui karísias pa malísias,
Amor pa dor,
Sintimentu pa finjimentu,

Jailson Borges Da Veiga

N djobe pa séu,
N lenbra kantu bu promete leba-n pa igreja di véu,
Si izistiba prémiu pa mudjer más infiliz di mundu,
N ta lebaba troféu,

Bu promete-n filisidadi eternu,
Más nha vida bu torna-l na un plenu infernu

This poem is about a reality faced by many women in the world, “Gender-based violence”. Indignation, suffering and regret characterise the problem in this poem. The woman speaker explains that, in the beginning, everything was wonderful, but over time her partner turned her life into a kind of hell.

Sodadi

Sodadi é kel sintimentu di fálda,
É kel diseju di ten puder di bua, di sálta,
É kel vaziu ki ta kéma na petu,
É kel angústia ki nu ta karéga pa dentu,
É kel vontadi inkontrolável di tene tudu pur pertu,

Sodadi é kel sensason ki ta ben di fundu kurason,
ki ta nxinanu ma ka izisti nada más bon di ki da atenson
a kes ki ta stendenu mon na kualker tipu di situason,

Sodadi
Sodadi ten un sabor mesmu margós,
Más, é el ki ta demostranu kenha ki rialmenti é inportanti pa nós,
Sodadi É kel diseju inkonstanti di obi voz di kel pisoa markanti,
a kada instanti, y xinti kada bez menus distanti,

Sodadi sta pur ditraz di txeu dráma,
É responsável pa nós kurason en xáma,
El ki ta fazenu rifliti y valoriza amizadi,
El tanbé ki ta fazenu xinti nesisidadi di dumina umildadi,

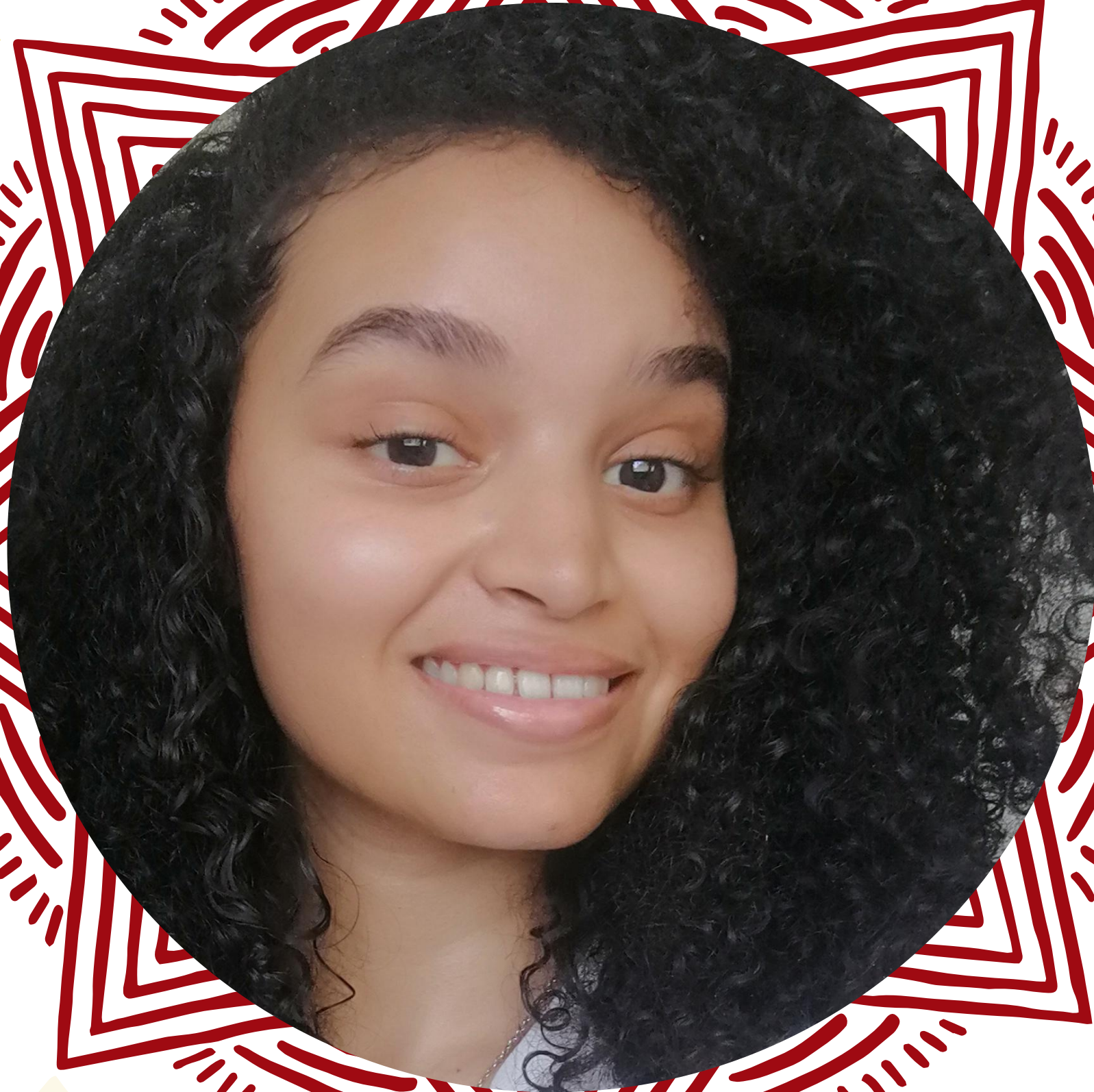
Xinti Sodadi é pása dia sen kume,
É pása noti sen durmi,
É xinti tristi ku medu di sumi,

Sodadi É kel vontadi di viaja na tenpu y vive di novu tudu kes momentus ineskesível,
É kel diseju terível di ser invisível,
Sodadi é di kel tipu di sintimentu más inkrível,

É ta faze-u txora,
É ta faze-u prende da valor,
É ta faze-u konxe sabor di verdaderu amor,
É ka ta dexe-u ignora kenha ki bu ta adora y ki na bu kurason ta mora, Sodadi é xinti un vaziu na alma,
É di kel midjor forma di diskubri kenha ki nu ta áma!
Sodadi! Ah sodadi!

This poem in Portuguese talks about a strong and uncontrollable sensation that, when we are separated from the people we love, makes us feel “longing” from the depths of our soul. Despite being painful, longing has its good side in that it helps us to discover those we truly love.

Imogene Mist



Tamia Adolph, under the pseudonym Imogene Mist, is a writer, musician, and creative. She is currently a Masters in English Literature student at the University of Johannesburg. Her literary research interests include psychoanalysis, madness, and gender and sexuality. She is the founder of #MeTooButImStillHere, a mental health and wellness initiative that aims to advocate for mental health in Africa. Her writing focuses on mental health struggles, the experiences of women, fiction, and children's literature.

Imogene Mist

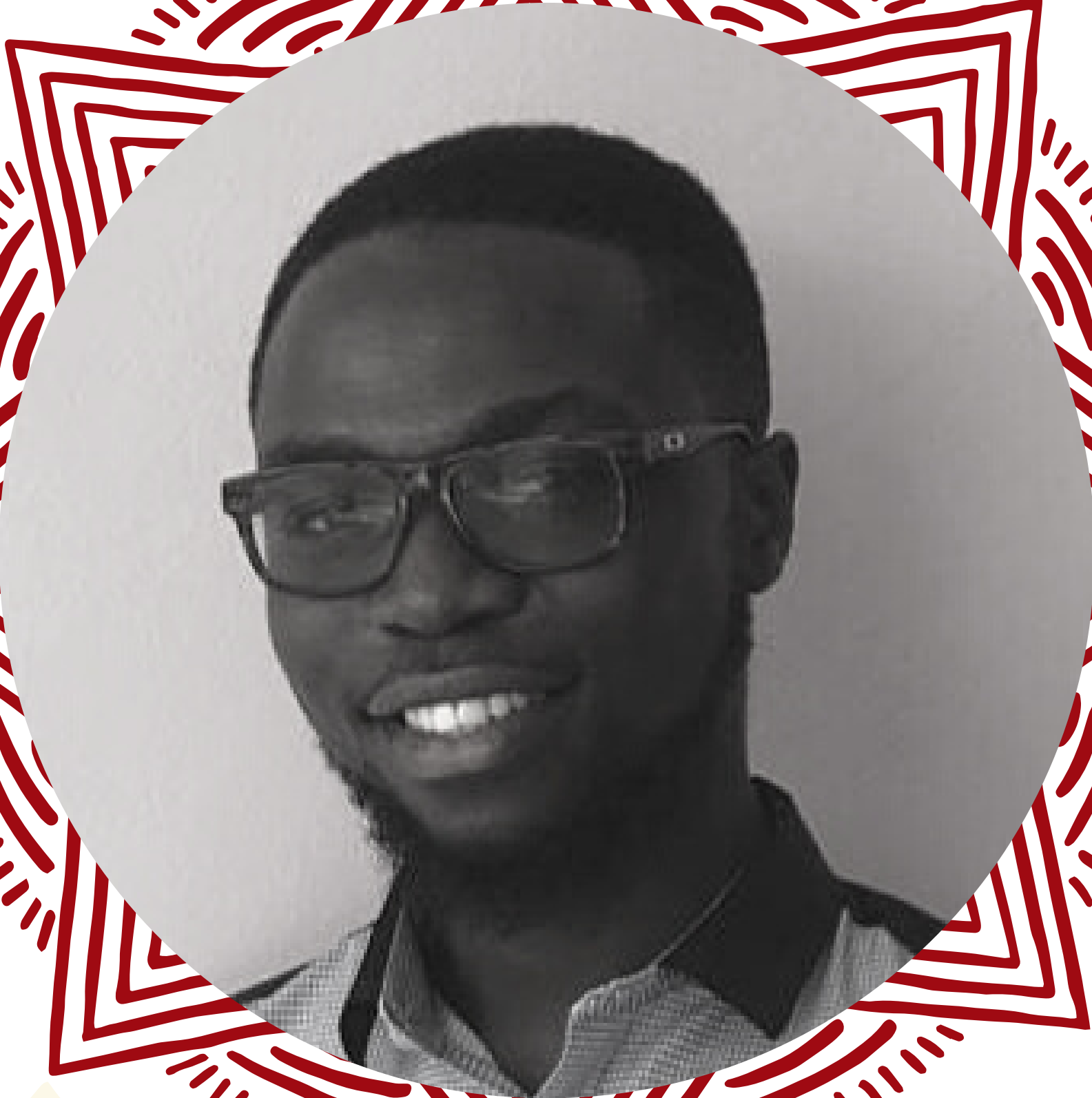
The Crown

They tell me to
“fix” my hair
that my hair is too wild
like my spirit,
my being,
my fight,
too wild.

How do you tame the lion in her when a lioness roars out from her head?
When roots grow from her follicles and sprout with kinks and bends
into trees of life and breath
where birds learn flight in nappy nests
and sing their lullabies in the key of spiral.
For her hair so wild and free
Is Africa intertwined in black soil and pride.
For her hair is a crown of curls;
heavy and jeweled
fit for only that of a queen
a mother of the earth
who gives life through the wisdom of her ancient threads of hair
who has known the sweat passion that wet the ground
who has known the rain who kisses the flowers to sleep.

For this queen carries sun on her shoulders,
giving morning to the creatures of night.
She is wind that turns the earth on its axis
She is midnight darkness that grows and caresses the oceans
And she wears her crown of dents and curls and kinks
for in her skin is her secret.
for in her
is life.

Kobina Duncan



Kobina Duncan is a Ghanaian writer currently pursuing an MPhil in literature and serving as a demonstrator at the University of Cape Coast. He says, "The first artistic piece which struck a chord with me was a short popular folktale 'Ananse' and the 'Pot of Wisdom'. Since my discovery of this tale and the magic of storytelling, I have carefully nurtured my love for the arts."

Kobina Duncan

I Had a Dream

I am sad to know that this will just be one of the many
Sixty-two years ago a great Ghanaian stood and proclaimed our freedom
It brought great joy to the multitude
We had conquered
We had shown our fortitude
If only they knew

Now in the present we are still not free
We are tied to the masters of old
Tied with new chains
Shiny new shackles we mistake for jewelry

Still in the present we fight to look like them
Ashamed of our wonderful skins
We shed them and wear new ones
Fragile new skins in the hopeless attempts at equality

It is clear that we have failed in our bid to evolve
We stay chained
I proclaim today that our stories could have been different
Regardless of what they say we would have been better off

I had a dream that we were untouched by that civilization
I had a dream that we fought them off when they came
That Yaa Asantewaa¹ won that war
I go back to the years before the merriment
The years before the premature jubilation

I had a dream that we never sold our brothers
I had a dream that we were the world's hub
We stood with our cocoa
They begged for our oil
Paid to touch our soil

My faith dwindles every day
I have that dream less and less
I need a spark
To ignite that fire that burned within
So the dream I had can be the reality we have
So we can say we are finally free

Grandpa's Story

It's another night
We gather around the fire's light
There he sits
Clothed in the brilliance of his wrinkled skin
The beautiful sight
"Come closer *mmofra*,"² he instructs
He starts the long tale
The one that never grows stale
The one of the spirits who stole our lands
The spirits who robbed our minds
They came in beautiful vessels which walked on water
Telling stories about a man who will save us

Kobina Duncan

“Were we dying?” Ato asks
“No” Grandpa replies “we were truly living”
They brought solid water
One which showed us our blackness

They said they came to give
But they took and took
They carried my grandmothers away
They pushed my grandfathers into those beautiful vessels
The ones which walked on water
Like their man once did
Within these vessels the hypocrisy hid
Was shown to my grandfathers
Felt by my grandmothers

The night grows darker
The fire dies faster
Grandpa looks at the moon which hides in fear of the story
It is time to sleep

Notes

1 Yaa Asantewaa: Ashanti Queen who led her people in their final war against British invasion in 1900 before Ghana came under full colonial rule. She was captured and sent to the Seychelles where she passed away after twenty years in prison. She is a celebrated figure in Ghanaian history for her legacy as a wise leader dedicated to her people.

2 *mmofra*: children (Akan)

Alice Jossy Kyobutungi



*Alice has a masters in literature from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, and is currently doing her PhD. She is a senior lecturer in the Department of Languages and Literature at Bishop Stuart University in Mbarara. Her interests are in poetry, oral literature, and young adult literature. She is the author of a poetry book, *Dance of the Intellect* (2010), and a collection of folktales, *Fireplace Experience in Ankole* (2012). She has also written two critical works on the poetry of Henry Barlow. She can be contacted at ajtumwesigye@educ.bsu.ac.ug*

Alice Jossy Kyobutungi

Five Poems About Youth

Song of a Teenager

Here I am
Impressive, intimidating
But powerless though powerful.
Here I am
A definition:
Defined by society
A rebel
A delinquent
Searcher of identity
An ambitious, self-seeking
individual
Without direction, without experience
Without a sober mind –
Or so they say.

They think for me, choose for me,
Speak on my behalf
Control my every move.

I want to know me
My capacity, my ability,
I want to do all the things I am
denied
And discover how much power I
wield
I want to say all I feel
Exercise all my uniqueness.
Let me discover
What lies on the other side?
Of the cage...
Oh how tired I am
Of being the other.

Let It Not Hold You Back

Let it not hold you back
Let it not catch you now
Like a hare, as swift run –
Pause not to breathe or look back
With all your might, run –
Until you outdo your betters
In this race of life.

Let not your age snatch your zeal
Rather let it spur you on –
Allow not your peers to lead you astray
Instead guide them through the dim alleys of doubt
As you slip through the dark foliage of adventure
To miss out not, but still see far...
Dash through edgy adolescence
Allowing transcendence to foster your steps
As you let Him, above, hold your hand –
Let not your youth hold you back.

Alice Jossy Kyobutungi

The Young Adult Character

I am their lesson plan
A demonstration, a practical exercise
For teachers, poets, scholars...
To teach, to preach, to study.
As a 'Beauty Queen', an object on display,
I preach decency and safe sex
To the 'Child of a Delegate',
Who advocates girl-child rights;
And promotes the gender-agenda...
When 'Things Fall Apart', I ran away with the white men
To expose the darker side of Africa
And, as a 'Houseboy', my fate pathetic, used and abused,
I preach morality despite being warned that
'Prettyboy, Beware' of the paedophiles! Expose their evils!
While in a 'Voice of a Dream' that is sought at a great cost,
My dreams are shattered, although
In the Moses series, adventure is my toll
Though teachers and administrators won't let me be.

I want to walk in their world,
see myself in their mirror;
I want to dream, to search, to find...
I want to face my fears
And dry my tears
Dear writers, scholars, all, please
Let me be me.

Blessed Curse

In ecstatic excitement, my youthful spirit soured
As I, in apprehension, gracefully cat-walked down the ramp;
To be the centre of attention.
Walking confidently in the hearts of men
Smiling disarmingly in their being
To receive the crown of fame
And taste the power of beauty,
My beauty.
To trample down the pride of rivals
And arouse their quiescent envy.
Like a wildfire, my fame spread
Far and wide, my name broadcast –
To keep me afloat all media channels;
Their goal.
That led them and me to pill-power
Together we traversed the hurdles
Till we touched the summit
Not without sham stamina
With fake age, fake face, fake skin
Fake courage, fake esteem...
Till one truthful day
The decoy faded
To reveal:
Scared, timid, desperate me
Lean, haggard, worn
In a once-upon-a-time
Beautiful shell.

Alice Jossy Kyobutungi

A Letter to my Mind

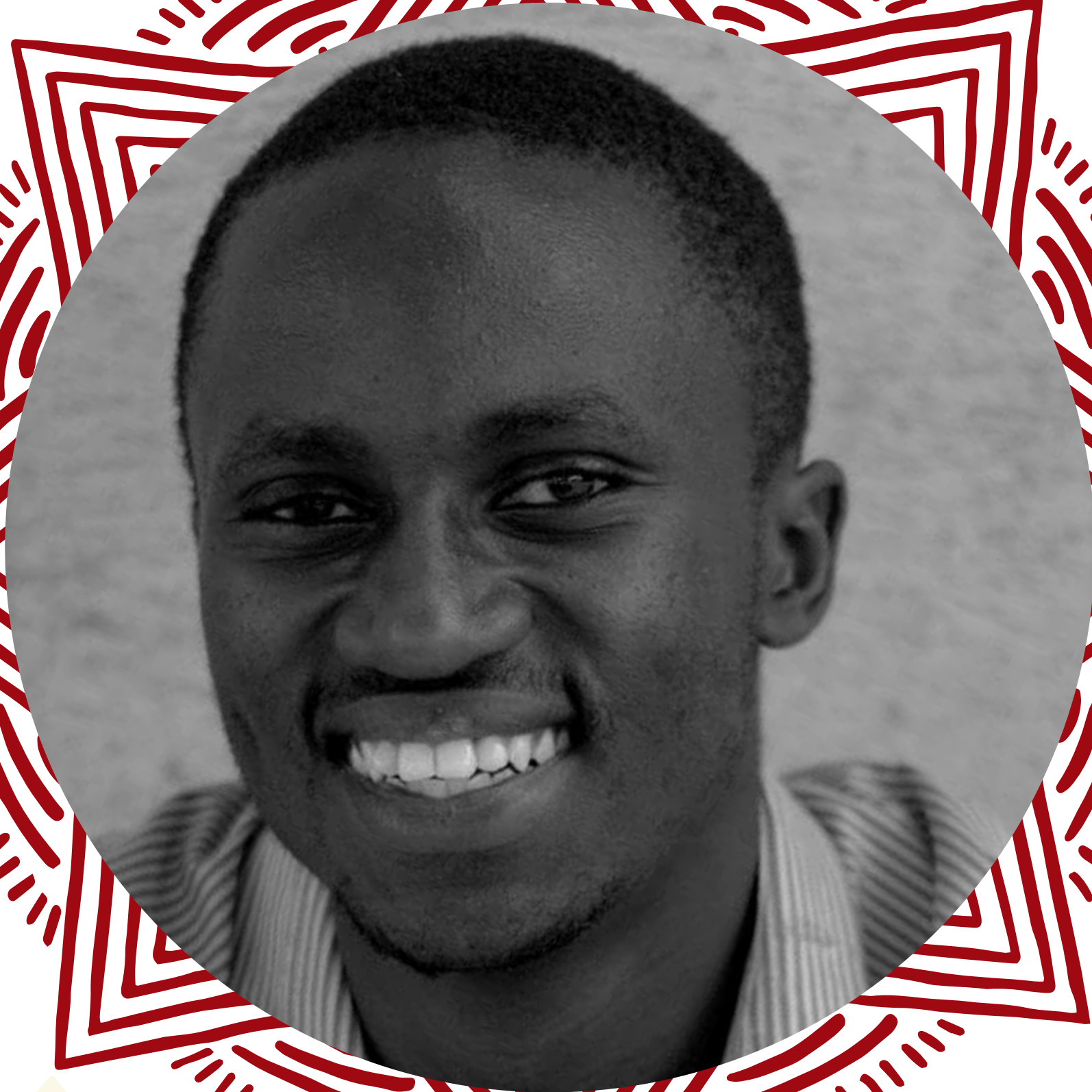
Dear Mind,

Listen, O listen to this my plea.
You get ready, I beg you,
Ready for manipulation
To be swayed to their side
Ready for objectification
To be what you must
For their satisfaction.

Listen, O listen to this:
To wait for their, 'No!'
Their 'Stop!'
And their 'Wait!'
To avoid conflict or stress.
Wait to be used and abused,
Despised and dumped
Get ready for disapproval
Dismissal and ambivalence
To be blessed and cursed at once –

With thanks receive:
Orders and counsel,
Caution and sermons
As you brace yourself for
More perception
More intelligence
More sensitivity
To travel towards maturity
On the road to self-identity...
Listen, O listen to this my plea.

Haggai Imbiaka



Haggai Imbiaka was born and raised in the slums of Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya. He started writing poems in high school and believes it helped him in tackling and processing life during this otherwise confusing time. His poems concentrate on the complexity of human experience in all its intricacies. He believes that the arts provide the best tools for Africans to tell their stories, for which he has a passion. You can follow him on Instagram @haggaiimbiaka

Haggai Imbiaka

African HerStory

Have you ever heard of the African HerStory?
The stories of African queens and heroines?
Whose tales have been silenced with the pen of HiStory?

Have you heard of Nefertiti?
Beauty and brains
The Egyptian queen
United her nation with the Nubians
Engineering religious revolution of Monotheism
And sculpting Egypt with lustering monuments and splendor

Haven't you heard of the songs of the Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms of Angola?
As they sing to the warrior Queen Anne Nzinga
Songs of how she fought the Portuguese as her brother absconded his throne
A woman possessed with sheer diplomacy and courage

Have you heard of Empress Taytu Betul of Ethiopia?
Who helped her husband defeat the Italians
Or Empress Kandake, who threatened to
Break Alexander the Great's clean streak of winning wars
And prevented him from going further south of Egypt
Have you?

Have you heard of Charwa of Zimbabwe?
Makatilili wa Mmwenza of Giriama?
Yaa Asantewaa of the Asante Kingdom?
Women who fought back the brutal hand of Imperials
Have you?
Let Africa rise up again
And remind her children of HerStories
So that the world would see
The valor and beauty in her story

Forbidden love

Ours was a forbidden love
She prayed facing Kaaba
While I prayed looking up at the clouds
Occasionally
I would ask my God
Why He is the one to separate us.

I was black, serving spoons and severing hedges
My sweat salting my body and my soul
She was white, furnished with gold chains
Her sweat fragranced with sanitized deodorant

"This is the order of life son," my mum would tell me
Bitter I was to the society and its obsession with stratification

But every night
Under the disguise of the moon
We would meet under a tulip tree
And for a moment we would
Enjoy our world of no religion, order or color
A world where only love brought us together

Haggai Imbiaka

5030

I looked through the hole of time
Into 5030 and there I was
In a museum staring at an ancient skeleton behind the display glass
A mysterious man standing beside me with a long white beard
Stroking it with his callous hands
An act that made him purr like a stroked cat
“They loved the world more than each other,” the man said
They built empires with bones as bricks and blood as water
And printed their magnificent achievements on tresses for the future
Yet they lived for the moment
They fought for land and power
Building more disastrous weapons
While their children starved to death
Replacing rice with landmines
And turning themselves into machines.

They fought over gold and forgot their hearts in the cold
Dug trenches for more minerals and filled these holes with the dead.
Ferried to the planets unknown in the galaxy in pursuit of more
Leaving their own planet with tombstones and obese vultures.

I moved my eyes closer to the display to see this animal
And there it was, the remains of a Human skeleton
Holding a silver sword in its hand
Words “Homo Sapiens with a tool” inscribed below.
I woke up to the news of war and terrorism in the Middle East
Ebola in Africa and drug trafficking in Mexico.
A nuclear test in North Korea and acrimonious sermons on the pulpit
I woke up to a decaying planet and fatuous conferences.

The African Night

Tonight,
I will dance,
As the night crawls in,
Blending in the rhythm,
The yellow fire,
Picking the beats,
Raising its furnace hands up,
Throwing sparks of flames out,
Inviting the moon,
Who in the same breath,
Has supped all the colors from the earth,
Complementing it with a silver touch,
The river picking it,
Producing floating, twinkling diamonds,
As it whispers the song silently,
Between gigantic trees,
Shaking heads,
To the winds,
Carrying the drum vibrations,
The night,
Keeping the African rhythm,
To the natives alone,
A secret,
Sacred,
Passed from generations,
Stored and known by heart

Uma Thandeka Muhwati



Uma Thandeka Muhwati (aka unleashedbyuma) is a 22-year-old lady from Harare, Zimbabwe residing in Johannesburg, South Africa. She is currently studying to become a chartered accountant with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and hopes to attain her bachelors from Oxford Brookes University in the UK. She started writing poetry after high school, with a focus on mental health, love, personal growth and Black Consciousness. She shares her work on social media platforms such as Instagram (@unleashedbyuma) and Poetizer.

Uma Thandeka Muhwati

folasade

'honour bestows a crown'

folasade!
born to a king
and his divorcee concubine.
you were born a princess, your people's servant
yet you walk this earth a goddess

folasade!
the sole envy of village maidens,
awon ọdọ worship the ground you walk on.
the elders wish you for their sons.

oh folasade!
omọbinrin mi!
you were born different!
darker than the average maiden,
milk white teeth with a gap!
a flat nose like that of your father
nothing about you says you're mine.

folasade!
you chase about these books,
these papers the white man reads a lot.
what future will you have?
find a man, now that's a future.

folasade!
'i have dreams,' you say,
a dream to be a nurse, forget that one Sade!
men, honourable men!
awon omọ-alade, farmers and champion wrestlers
have come with gifts seeking
your hand for marriage
and you refuse all in the name of
a white man's education.

folasade!
ayaba!
remove that crown.
be a true woman like your fellow friends.
wear a wrap, your *ipele* shawl,
and learn to cook proper *egusi*!
what will you cook for your *ọkọ*?

folasade!
as your name,
be honoured by wearing your
'proper yoruba maiden' crown.
i will rest my case.

Notes

Folasade is pronounced as Fow-lah-shaa-dey, Sade for short
awon ọdọ - young men
omọbinrin mi - my daughter
awon omọ-alade - sons of chiefs
ayaba - queen
ipele - cloth usually worn so that it hangs over the left shoulder
egusi - a vegetable soup
ọkọ - husband

Martin Chrispine Juwa



Martin Chrispine Juwa is a Malawian senior high school teacher of history and social studies. Sometimes he writes poetry; sometimes he makes reggae music in Lilongwe, Malawi. He loves reading and writing poetry to explore and express his thoughts and emotions. Martin's works have appeared in Project Muse (2020), JSTOR library, the 2018 and 2019 Best New African Poets Anthology, Nthanda Review, and Scribble Magazine. His poetry has also recently been featured in Walking the Battlefield: An Anthology of Malawian Poetry on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Martin Chrispine Juwa

Black Girl Magic

Paint my heart
Brush it through
With your heavy palm-touch
Burn my worries
With your soothing melody
Your voice; hoarse and loud
Black girl,
Work your magic on me
Tame me with those deep brown eyes;
Beads hurrying a-round your socket balls,
A junction to your soul

No Filter

That black skin is stunningly beautiful
And it speaks volumes of the earth's natural magic.
Those eyes, with gleams of light
That matches the swag of stars at night
Tells of the fashion of grace and delight
You are a real exhibition of black womanhood
For you commandeer poise.

They expect to see your shoulders fall
Like slender stalks of maize,
They expect to see your tears rush down
The slope of your face; the Napolo way

Yet you face the crowd
And take footsteps of gale with you
To tear down contempt and marginalization
For you are one proud, black queen
With no edits and no filters

Berren Thampler



Berren Thampler is the pen name of Bronwyn King. She has been a language editor since 2013, mostly in academia. She has a BA (Theory of Literature and Creative Writing) and is currently doing her honours. She started a consultancy, Gazelle Editing, and has supported herself as a freelancer throughout her career. Bronwyn has the drive and skills to take projects from the ground up and thrives in partnerships with those she can serve in furthering a variety of aims from research to publication. In 2019, Bronwyn started Jay Lit and is the managing editor as well as covering social media, marketing, and website and graphic design. Her company website is gazelleediting.com and she can be contacted at bronwyn.king@gazelleediting.com for professional services or africanyouthliterature@gmail.com regarding Jay Lit.

Berren Thamper

Rust

Erosion of comprehension
damage of the cargo and who'd want that
It's no matter to be bled, dumped and dead
May as well crawl among the wreckage
Getting up again is for the brave and the wanted
To hide the grazing and dents lies work better
than paint and even better
than truth if you can live with a corroding identity
because when the mind is dead the body follows
Decomposition
Smile your grey grim grin girl just long enough
to convince

People say something's not right
but she's holding onto the barrier
Her face is sliding away and the shoulders and hips
decaying at the edges, her eyes seem
to have flown away, looks like her
hair's falling out too, her hands are untidy shadows
and her chest has gone rancid inside

And if you look real close up you'll see the cracks on her neck
But it's what you don't see that is the
most disturbing

Girls like these are cats
Declawed. When kitty loses her claws
she's lost half of every finger and most of every toe
she's scared and sore and she'll never trust again.
So she hides away, turns to biting, to spraying
and pretty soon you'll want to put that down.

She's holding the appendages in a certain semblance
But she's losing her job
She keeps walking
But you don't see her knees caving in when she turns the corner
She's quiet
But you don't hear her screaming when she's in the car alone
You comment on the fact that she never cries
But you don't realize that desiccated flesh
isn't capable of that
You say she's bad, yeah she's gone wild
A real mad feral bitch
And everyone believes you

Because what's a dead bird in a field anyway?
What does it matter which kind of worms eat it up?
You say she's gone crazy but that's primal language for you
That's all the humanity she has left
If you get around to do some reading you might discover
The wall crawl is the favoured activity
of the mad feral bitch and the declawed cat

But it's alright now
Don't worry about it
Because nobody expects
You to understand

Berren Thamper

Sister Sorrow

Little cake in a clear paper cup
Soft strawberry pink icing
Is no deception
Glistening red cherry
Is really as you are

I like you
You suit my mood
Every day
I've been watching your hair grow
Disentangled through each other
Nearly twenty now
Why didn't I?
Could have, should have
Protected you at every step

Pink feather dance flit
All I need to know
My stripe turquoise heels don't fit
Your pale feet too small

Scraped pellicule shoulders
make me sad but
Our busy every day kind
Papillon house
Flapping pancake happy
Flopping Basset ears adorable
Nearly twenty now

To the horsepital with
The two of us again! By
Radar scan I see whatever
Is you from me bounces back
In our home together

In your fragile beauty
A little temper
In your quiet innocence
Is good to see
Nearly twenty now

The frustration and the woe
I know it from the both of us
Some things drift from recall and
Some things you don't get over
But you learn to cope with them
To be a stubborn black Scottie

How your slight frame
Carries a load a strong man would flee from
I do not know but of this I am sure
You are my sister sorrow
I am your sister in sorrow

Berren Thamper

Look around us now
What is happiness to us?
What is home to us?
We know it
One day we will show it

Thank you little cake in a cup
You taught me to keep a secret
You keep mine
I owe you my every effort
Of sisterly Rottweiler protection
I love you

Who I Am

One day one night balance into another
I look at myself in the mirror
Who am I?

Am I strong as my living bones
Am I bright as my blinking eyes

Fall asleep in my bed
Wake up in a chair
Sleep-walking down the stairs

Take this handful of your pills
One day one night shuffles in another

Scan my brain
Smells of soap and feels of wool
It's not the same

Am I firm like my jaw, set teeth rooted in
My heels on the floor, my toes, do I feel the earth aright

Eyes bled pink melon
Grated lips
Gorgon's hair
I think I remember
My name
Pale breast

I tremble hold the steel I tremble grip the porcelain
I tremble tied to the bed I tremble fever smoulder underneath

One day one night fades before the mirror
Lungs pressed tight gasping
Tiny flickers
Is this who I am?

A patient, always a girl pulling away
From the hand of a stranger
Always a woman hiding from the fist
Is this who I am?

Berren Thamper

Meet your head at the wall
Crawl into the wall
Feel feel a little
Feel feel something!
Will the pain in my soul
Meet my head at the wall

Hold the knife, steady on girl, until it's safe
Raise a shield against the eyes of the night
The demon hunts me in my sleep
Shield the core
A giant goat
Waits at the door

Tie a strong rope around my body
Little body wrapped tight
Hold it out until dawn against
The centaur sent from hell

Hold your head back from his hand
I know what you are
I am stripped but you are naked

On my knees on my palms
In a coffin
Beat the ground
Give time to my fists

Only God knows if I will return
Only God knows if there's any left
Inhale girl
Exhale woman
Is this who I am?

Climb girl
Spit the mud out and climb
If you want to live
If you want it
Will it

Brother Blood
I cannot run
Return
To run through me
Sister Sorrow
Hold my hand
Do not leave me alone
Madness calls from the edge
Wails in the corners of my bed

Standing up
Years wind their path through my eyes
I know who I am

I will fight you with both
Bare hands
I know who I am

Berren Thamper

I'll give you not one single chance
You will never claw my heart
I know love

This frail hand
My strong heart
Strengthens
I know who I am

Last Born

No Accident
after-thought management perhaps
but there must have been some intention
some rationale in the scheme of creation

Tries, but there's no niche
no belonging on this ancient chain of being
endures, but with no power to
change anything but oneself

And must to force the fit
Note to self:
Can only break to make

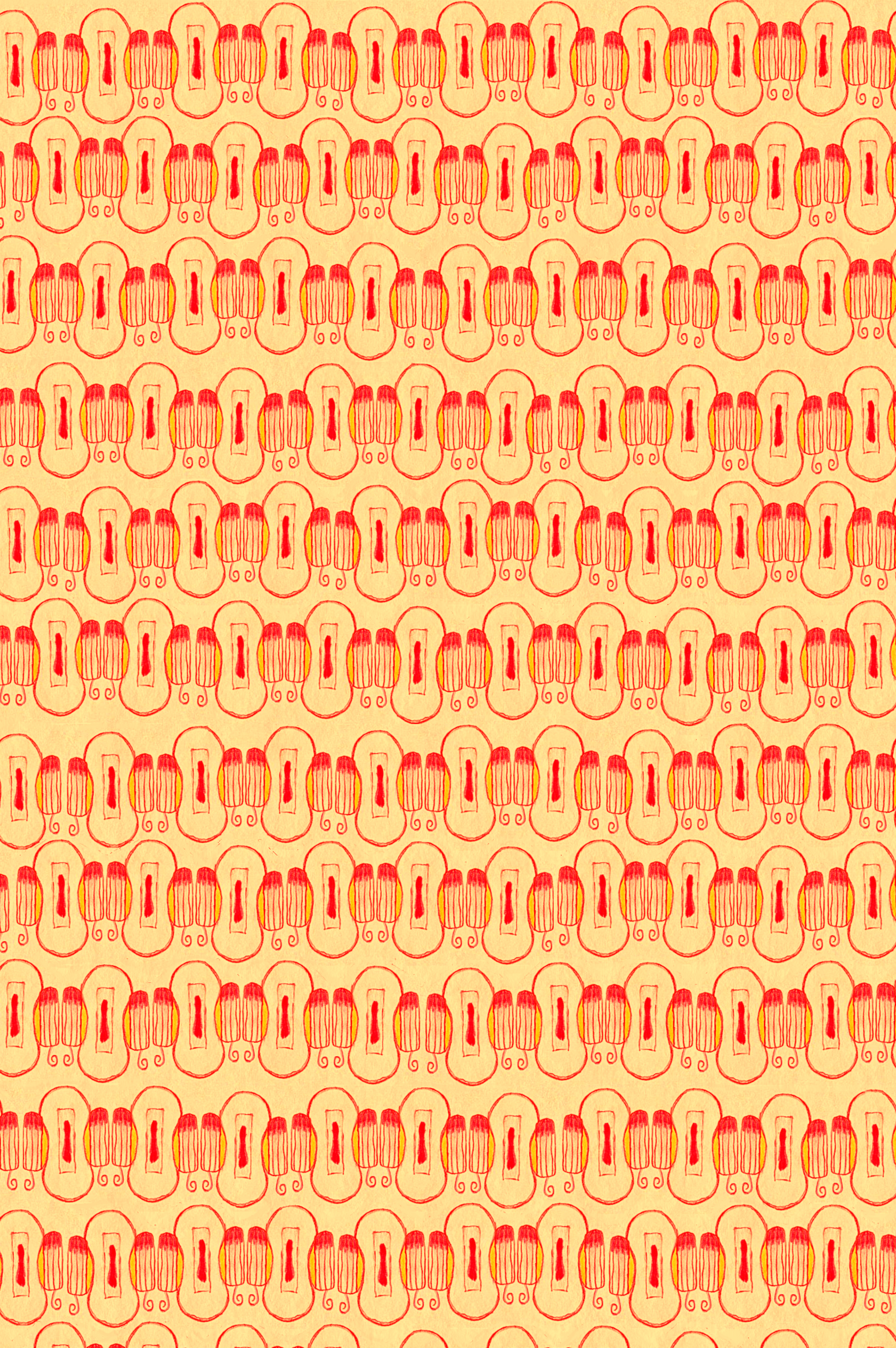
No belonging, but pretending
shape-shifter foundling child of Lir
make-up right well-like must make-do
wait, watch, follow, copy, change to
please. A stranger with nothing new
to welcome into the world.

Named
Blamed and
Shamed
Hesiod proclaimed
Το ὀμορφο κακό¹
Pandora
with her body, her jar-what-turned-into-a-box and her
Period.

A stranger with nothing new
to welcome into the world
This last born of all creation

Note

¹ Ancient Greek: The beautiful evil



THE JOURNAL OF
AFRICAN YOUTH LITERATURE



Short Stories



Sandile Ngubane

Sandile is a 29-year-old fledgeling writer, and this is his first published literary work. He lives in a modest town called Mayville, in the shanty residential area Cato Crest, located about five kilometres away from the Durban CDB. For as long as Sandile can remember, he has always been an avid reader but never intended that one day he would become a writer. After completing matric, he felt despondent, with no fees to complete further studies and no job to earn hard cash. Writing has become his incantation, henceforth. The artwork featured with this story is by 25-year-old artist Nkosi Chili, who is also from Mayville, Durban.

Sandile Ngubane

Our Ride or Die

Five years into the new democracy, Cato Manor – affectionately known as Umkhumbane – still bore remnants of apartheid: a cluster of ramshackle shacks devoid of proper sanitation, running water and electricity. Some of the courageous inhabitants resorted to illegally connecting to the electric current from the streetlights. Too often, there were fatal consequences for that level of bravery.

Despite a lack of amenities, children always find ways to create a pastime. Like fluttering moths to a little flame, we were inevitably drawn to one object: a red chainless bicycle. Often, a throng of us would take turns mounting the bicycle from the peak of the steep road and descend downwards. Most of the time, turning a deaf ear on our mothers' reminders to do house chores and run errands. Darkness was our worst enemy since it always curtailed our fun just when it had reached its climax. We would then reluctantly go to our respective homes where harsh questions or, for some, a spank awaited us.



One night I came home dragging along my usual companion, the bicycle. All along the journey, a fat moon had been hanging over my head, as if it was going to explode on top of me. About a year ago, my mom had arrived with the bicycle from her domestic work in Westville. It was in decent shape, except that the chain was missing.

When mom answered the knock, and I was suddenly bathed with paraffin lamp light that issued from our wood house. And when she laid her eyes on me, she was incensed at what she saw.

“You look like a pig that has been shovelling mud!”

I quailed and examined my clothes as if seeing them for the first time. Grease was all over my t-shirt like a bad rash.

“Have you bought enough soap to wash those clothes, Bongani?”

“No, mom,” I muttered.

She stood ponderously on the doorway with fists rested on her hips, which gave me a momentary reprieve. After a scathing stare, she flounced off into the kitchen. I timidly dragged along the bicycle into the house and parked it underneath my squeaky bed. She poured water in the kettle and laid it on the flame of a paraffin stove. In a short while, water was boiling. I sloshed it into an enamel dish and took it outside for a bath where I wouldn't have the inconvenience of mopping a wet floor.

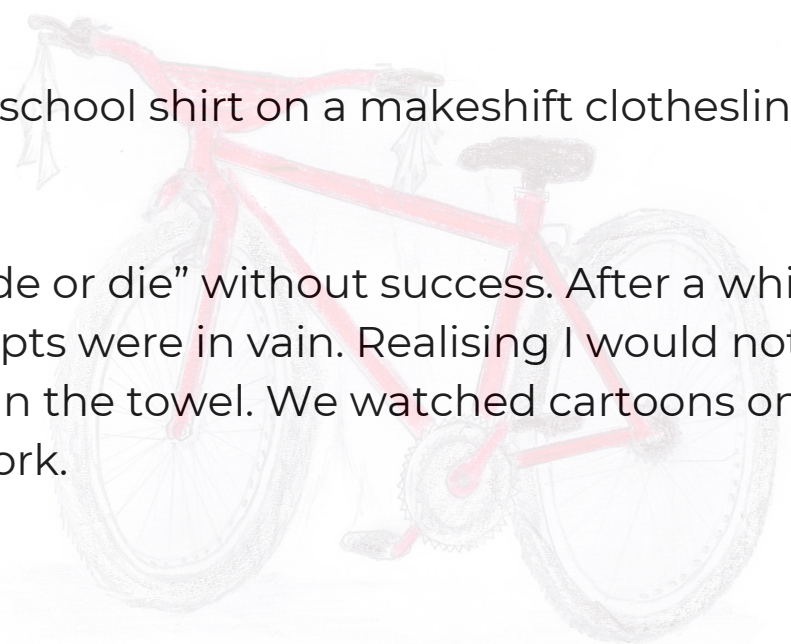
After the warm bath, I changed into pyjamas. A warm, scrumptious meal of pap and chicken feet awaited me. Meanwhile, mom was busy ironing my school clothes. When I had finished eating and was ready to sleep, she scolded me for my earlier porcine behaviour and pinched my ears for all the trouble. That night, my sleep was uncomfortable. My ears were throbbing with pain.



When I returned from school the next day, I was as disciplined as a marine corp. Earlier in the morning, mom had drummed it into my ears that if I ever rode the bicycle again, she would beat me into a pulp and feed me to vultures.

My close pal, Ntokozo, showed up while I was busy hanging a school shirt on a makeshift clothesline, a rope tied from the eaves to a nearby guava tree.

He made several attempts to convince me to return to our “ride or die” without success. After a while, three of our partners in crime materialised. Likewise, their attempts were in vain. Realising I would not budge, they left with their heads dropped. Ntokozo had thrown in the towel. We watched cartoons on a blurry black and white television until mom came home from work.



Sandile Ngubane

Our Ride or Die

My imposed hiatus lasted a monotonous five days. On the sixth day, I was back to the thick of things, and my partners in crime were enamoured. Through my abstinence from the game, I had earned all sorts of monikers. “Mama’s boy” and “sissy boy” were some that came to my attention.

Ntokozo and I sat on the pavement, waiting for our turn to ride the bicycle. We were laughing our lungs out at Msizi and Sabelo’s argument taking place on the opposite pavement.

Out of the blue, Mandisa, a beautiful girl who was Ntokozo’s neighbour, materialised. She had caramel skin and sported neatly plaited hair. Her home was one of the select few built with painted corrugated iron and deemed to be classy. Ntokozo nudged me with an elbow and, when he received my undivided attention, he pointed at her with an index finger, a smirk pervading his face. She was now at the tuck shop counter, a loaf of bread clutched in her hands. He knew all too well that I had a crush on Mandisa but lacked the bravery to tell her. At the age of eight, who could blame me for my cowardice?

When she took another path back home, I was the most relieved human being on the planet.



Xina plodded towards us, hands taut on the handlebars, pushing the bicycle up the steep road. I heard Msizi saying to Sabelo, “I’m going to tell Xina what you once said about her.” He had evidently come short off their tit-for-tat. It was a tell-tale moment. Upon reaching the top of the road, she heaved a huge sigh of relief. Descending the road was our favourite part, returning back was an onerous task. One had to negotiate the steep road while pushing the chainless bike and deal with aching shoulders and calf muscles for all the trouble.

“Sabelo said you look like a gorilla,” Msizi blurted out. Ntokozo and I chuckled. Her real name was Zanele, but she went by Xina because of her lithe and supple body. She could do all kinds of somersaults and was, apparently, a good fighter as well. She was named after a Chinese lady who starred in a movie series which was all the rage at the time.

“He said I look like what?” Xina asked impassively. To me, it felt threatening.

Supposedly Sabelo thought Xina had sharp pointed ears and a skin that was as dark as soot. Whether that was equivalent to resembling a gorilla, it was only Sabelo who seemed to know. “Is what he is saying true, Sabelo?” She was crouched such that her gaze was level with Sabelo’s who was still sitting on the pavement. Meanwhile, Msizi, the match to the pending inferno, looked enthused at the prospect of a fight.

Sabelo remained taciturn as if what was happening didn’t ruffle his feathers the least. Ntokozo and I, huddled on the pavement, feared the worst.

“Can’t you hear that I’m talking to you?” She said tetchily. She pushed his forehead with her index finger, and his head tilted backwards. That was the straw that broke the camel’s back. He stood up abruptly, his neck muscles taut like a drawn bowstring. His breathing was heavy and rugged. We watched with keen interest, anticipating what was about to unfold.

“You want to fight?” She rolled her dress inside the elastic that lined her panties. She then pushed Sabelo with such force that he staggered but managed to regain his balance just in time. He came charging like an enraged bull, but she swooped on him before he could lay the first blow. She tripped him and, in an instant, was on top of him. By that time, a horde of charismatic children had swamped the fighting arena. We were chanting in unison, “Pero! Pero! Pero!”

Xina’s butt was parked on top of Sabelo’s chest. She used her knees to press his spread-eagled arms against the ground.

“Do you still want to fight?” She gave him a few slaps against his cheeks, which drew peals of laughter from the audience. When he shook his head, it was clear he wanted nothing to do with the fight anymore.

Sandile Ngubane

Our Ride or Die

If ever we had a presentiment on how the following day was going to pan out, we wouldn't have dared to mount our "ride or die".

The day started in high spirits, the mood and the competitive edge of the game was on another level. The only noticeable absentee was Sabelo, and that became a subject of jokes that he was scared of having round two with Xina. We also fooled Msizi into believing that Xina was lurking somewhere for an ambush. We could sense that he was starting to shake in his boots.

The day continued in that fashion, filled with banter and laughter. We flaunted our different riding styles, and I trumped all of them, followed closely by Ntokozo.

A light drizzle pinged against the road and our sweaty bodies. When I looked up at the sky, there were ominous signs. A dark blanket of clouds hung menacingly over us.

"Unfortunately we've reached the end of the day, guys," I said.

"But I was supposed to be the last one to ride," Sabelo said pleadingly.

"You'll be the one who's going to ride first tomorrow. It is raining now," I tried to reason with him. He looked morose. Whether that was a ruse to break my defences, I didn't know.

"Please be quick. I don't want heavy rain to arrive while I'm still here." I handed the bicycle over to him, oblivious of the fact that I would live to regret that decision for the rest of my life.



A thunderclap erupted and a bolt of lightning crisscrossed the sky. A knot of fear coiled in the pit of my stomach. All of a sudden, half of the houses in our area were pitch dark.

"Where is Sabelo?" I asked in alarm. The three of us exchanged worried looks. I trotted downwards, my two partners in crime tailed behind me.

As I approached, I was confronted by a deserted bicycle, which sent shivers down my spine. I stopped in my tracks, my eyes scouring the area.

"Where's Sabelo?" Xina breathed down my neck. I shrugged. When a bolt of lightning flashed, I thought I had glimpsed something in the bushes. I went to the thicket that flanked the road and scanned the area. I was shocked at what I saw. I emitted an earth-shattering wail. Xina and Ntokozo came rushing to me. They also couldn't hold back their tears.

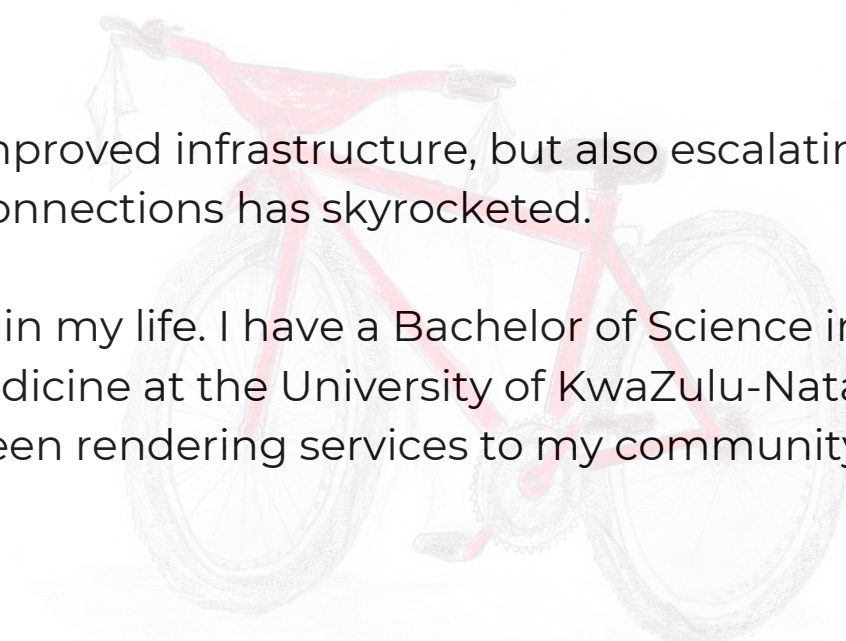
Sabelo's body lay grotesquely amidst the thicket. My first guess was that he had been hit by lightning, but when I saw bare electric wires, it dawned on me that he fell off the bike and was electrocuted. He was neither the first nor the last child to experience that cruel death.



Two decades passed swiftly, as if one was immersed in a dream, only to find that, when it had worn off, such a long time had elapsed.

There is a lot of transformation in Cato Manor, including improved infrastructure, but also escalating levels of crime. The number of shacks and illegal electricity connections has skyrocketed.

I, Bongani Gumede, have also experienced a lot of change in my life. I have a Bachelor of Science in Medicine from my alma mater, Nelson Mandela School of Medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I decided to open my own surgery two years ago, and it has been rendering services to my community ever since.



Sandile Ngubane

Our Ride or Die

I am also happily married to my lovely childhood sweetheart, Mandisa Khumalo, an optometrist practising in the same surgery with me. We are blessed with a three-year-old baby girl, Amahle. She was both our blessing and bundle of joy.

The bike riding seems to be running through my veins because I've joined a riding club and I partake in competitions whenever I get time. Right now, I'm weaving through traffic on our residential road. It seems one of the forever troublesome sewerage drains has spilt over the road, causing monumental congestion.

As I pass by a supermarket, I see one of the elderly women who is known as a gossip in our area. She waves a hand. I obediently wave back. I pedal for another block under the baking sun. When I reach a garage, I park my bicycle and ask a petrol attendant to look after it. I give him a twenty rand tip and I head inside the store. I fish one of my favourite cool drinks from the fridge and trudge to the till queue.

As I emerge from the shop, I bump into one of my former classmates who is infamously known for housebreaking and pickpocketing. He has a slew of gash marks on his face and head. Word doing the rounds was that he was recently out of prison. He asks for two rand; I give him five instead. He smiles from ear to ear and gives me a high five.

I pedal down the road while sipping a cool drink. When I reach the traffic light, I see a hale and hearty old man known in our area as a no-nonsense usurer. He shouts my name, and I make a salutation gesture.

My ultimate destination is my friend's home. It's the most significant day of his life, his birthday. A bouquet of flowers was tied in between the handlebars. Albeit my birthday was a few months away, we were born in the same year. He is now twenty-eight years old.

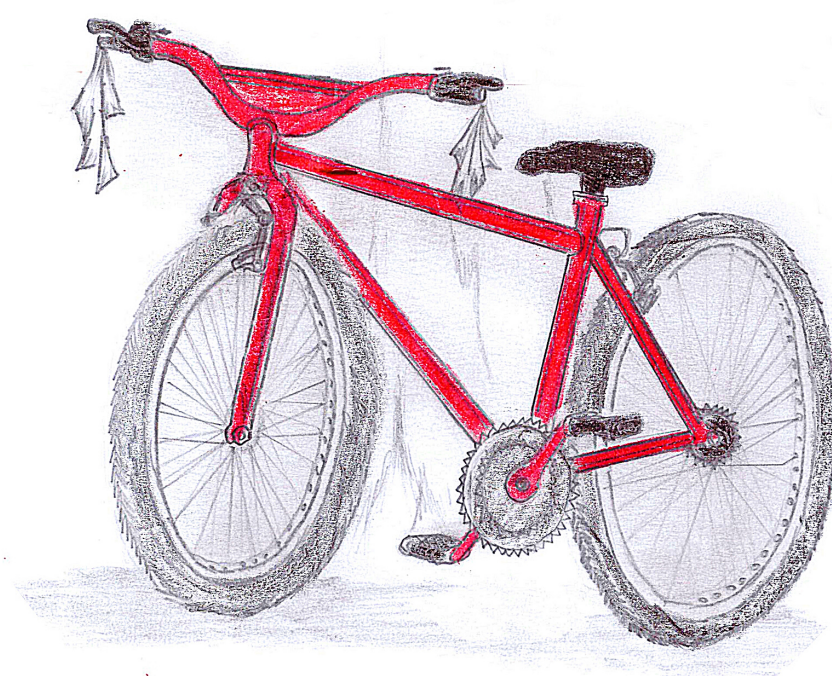
I reach a forked road and hook a left turn. I swill the last dregs of cool drink and throw the container in the receptacle. A municipality bus whooshes past me, generating a cool breeze that evaporates beads of sweat. I reach a recreational park lined with trees. I weave through them up until I reach a gate manned by a dozing security guard. I clear my throat, and he is snapped out of his dreamland. When he recognises me, he flashes a Cheshire cat smile. We've known each other for the past ten years since I started to frequent this place.

He opens the gate. I alight from my bike and leave it under his watchful eye. I walk through the gate and pass by a row of graves. I go to one particular grave, kneel by it, and I recite a silent prayer. I remove some of the weeds with struggling fingers, and then lay down the flowers I have brought with me.

My best friend since the loss of Sabelo had been Ntokozo. He too was lost ten years ago in an accident involving his bicycle and a car. Whenever I come to his grave, it evokes such feelings for which words continue to elude me. Where Sabelo's grave is, I know not, for his body was taken away by the state for autopsy, but his family never did get him back for burial.

I always pay him homage whenever it is his birth or death day.

Rest in eternal peace, my bosom friends.



Nkosi Chili



Itoro Bassey

Itoro Bassey is a Nigerian-American writer and cultural worker based in Nigeria. She has received residencies and fellowships from the Vermont Studio Center, San Francisco Writers Grotto, Edward Albee Foundation, and Aroji Drama Academy in Kenya. Itoro has recently been published in the Prairie Schooner and Glimmer Train and has received honors and recognition from the Book Smugglers review blog and Speculative Literary Foundation. She is currently working on a novella series following four generations of Nigerian women grappling with generational trauma, migration, and change, as they try to weave themselves into a new American fabric. Follow Itoro on Instagram and Twitter @itoroflower

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

The dream goes something like this. I'm seated at a majestic banquet table gasping for air, but doing my best to hide my asphyxiation. The corset I'm wearing is squeezing the dignity out of me, but since I look good, I bear it.

I see French macaroons, broccoli slathered in Velveeta cheese, fruit punch, Hamburg pizza, a pot of white sugar, garlic fries, biscuits, chocolate-covered donuts, evaporated milk, chin-chin, orange soda, petit fours, Lipton tea, red wine, Philly cheesesteaks, and a vat of sour cream on the dining table. These are the foods of my childhood and early twenties. I indulged in these foods for comfort. If I couldn't fix a problem, at least I could eat it. I still get cravings from time to time. Whenever I bite into sautéed kale with garlic, I catch myself thinking, *This is a buttered biscuit, this is a buttered biscuit, this is a buttered biscuit*. No surprise that I'm seeing a bounty of biscuits in this dream.

My family and our guests sit at the table. The women wear dresses with muted colors that are quite drab. The men banter back and forth, duking out who is most clever. Their collars are tight around their necks, and I fear they're choking but don't know it. Servants walk briskly about the dining hall to bring us food and drink. They look like blurs really, but I know they're there. My father sits at the head of the table, Mom's seated beside him, and there are random people I've never met, which makes me wonder if I should know them.

My father clinks his glass to propose a toast. He's donned a super-sized afro that distracts me from his speech because, amidst all these Victorian wigs, how's this afro going to pan out? He looks more suited to attend the Soul Train Awards or bite his thumb at the idea of a monarchy, but who am I to judge? I stuff my face with a petit four, hoping to disappear.

Eating beats talking. I wouldn't even know what to say, or how to say it anyway. A voice is a powerful impression and I'm at a loss for which to use. Should I use the British English my parents speak in polite company or the pidgin they speak in exasperation? Should I use my standard American voice, fit with a slight Bostonian mutter, or the voice I use when I'm about to mollywop somebody's ass? Maybe I should speak the language my parents spoke back home, though I don't know it; everyone assumes English isn't my first language anyway. Maybe then I should use the voice I use with myself. Brief and resolute. I take a spoon of sour cream and eat.

"Lady Arit has a message to report tonight. I've heard from guests that it's a salacious secret. Though I detest scandal, I think it is best her ladyship reveal what's at hand here." Everyone looks at me as if I'll be served for the main course.

"Yes, Arit," Mom says, taking a drink of wine. "We are most eager to hear this secret of yours. But before you divulge, allow me to share some advice. Nothing hides in the company of a prayer warrior." The guests break into laughter as I eke out a few words. Mom shifts her eyes from me to the rest of the table.

"Don't fret over Lady Arit's peculiar disposition. She's taking precautions to ensure she'll relay her message wisely."

My father clears his throat and waves away the butler ready to serve the entree. "Hurry now before our good meal goes cold," he barks.

I look at my reflection in the spoon and see it's an image of another woman. I refuse to name her, but she shakes her head and laughs through the brass. Better tell them the truth, girl. My face heats up. My corset is too tight, and the humiliation is near. The audience leans in to watch. I knock a pitcher of wine to the ground. The wine coats the floor until it becomes a pool of red. I scoop the wine and realize it's much thicker than expected and the smell is metallic. Am I dead?

I suddenly remember who I am in my waking life. If the wigs and posturing were out of the picture, I'm not sure there'd be much difference. I hold my knees as I cough as the pool of whatever I'm swimming in rises. I yell but liquid rushes in my mouth and down my throat. I wretch, trying to speak. *I can change*.

I wake up.



Itoro Bassey

The Outing

I began having this dream after Mom's phone call. When she confronted me, she wouldn't say the word. She only asked, "Are you someone engaging in woman-to-woman practices?" The best I could answer was, "I'm not straight." For a moment, she sounded relieved that the possibility of my dating the opposite sex wasn't ruled out. But I found myself irritated at her hope to make sense of me.

I pleaded with her that day, to my discomfort. "Please don't say I'm completely this when I'm not sure I'm fully that." I couldn't tell if I was five years old or twenty-nine that day. Her voice has the authority of the Almighty, and what do I have? I sounded shrill and whiny talking into the receiver, begging for validation. No bass, all flutter. It was a doomed conversation. There sat a grown woman who had forgotten herself. How sad.

I asked how she found out.

"Facebook. That picture you posted... Are those women or men you're standing around? I can't tell. And why are you kissing that girl? Since when did you become...? You don't look... nice," she said. "Were you hiding all this time?"

"No," I said. "I didn't think dating and hanging with who I want is such a crime."

Mom clicked her tongue. "Dear, back where I come from, it is."



She calls the next day in a series of threes. Three times in the morning. Three times in the afternoon. Three times at night. Mom's obsessed with threes. Her fixation on the number started with her love of all things Jesus Christ. Once she read the passage about how Jesus — the Son — belonged to the Father and the Holy Ghost, she believed everything had to belong to something. Three became her sweet number of belonging. If she bought fruit, she had to buy the navel oranges, the purple grapes, and the bananas because they all belonged in the polka-dotted fruit bowl, together.

If she was dressing me for church, she made sure I wore the itchy white lace dress, with the black Mary Jane's and that hideous striped sweater because, according to her, consistency in attire would put me closer to God. I've always feared her relationship with God; it seemed to override any need I had when trying to call her attention to what was happening under her nose. I would yank her arm, hoping she would look down, but she was always looking up.

For a year, I had kept these worries at bay, but now my anxiety had taken over. Even now, I couldn't get her to look at me, and I didn't want to be another hopeless little girl tugging at her mother's pant leg. The best thing to do was ignore her, especially if she was preoccupied with a higher power. Soon enough, I got a call that let me know exactly where I stand with her and God. We didn't raise you this way. I begin sending her calls to voicemail.



In a moment of weakness, I pick up her call. I've watched plenty of bizarre movies where mothers put arsenic in your chicken noodle soup to collect life insurance, or sleep with your boyfriend, or beat you because they're threatened. This is the woman who picked up a gas station job working the graveyard shift to make a down payment on a house in a nicer neighborhood. She once hid in fear of a gruff man pounding the door saying, "Come outside." *He had a gun.* She told me. *Thank goodness I locked the door.*

She was pregnant with me and, nine months later, I lived in that house.

I take the call. *Remove that picture, please. They use social media back home, too. You'll never get to visit back home in peace if they know this about you.*

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

I close my mouth and yell. The following week, I skip her calls through pangs of nausea and gut punches that say, This is my Mommy. I love my Mommy. This is my Mommy. I love my Mommy. The phone rings. I stare. She leaves messages. Deadly messages. I pronounce the following week: The Week of Holy Terror.

Monday

“Isn’t it too much of the same thing? The same part bumping against the same thing?” she asks, knowing I’m not there. “You’re such a pretty girl. Please, don’t let it go to waste.”

Tuesday

She reads from the Bible. “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw no good.”

Wednesday

She sings.
Akwa convention
Odu ke edem eyon
Nyin ikwo iyun idara
Koro jehovah odong
Nyin Esit

Loose translation: I’m going to hell.

Thursday

“I’ve been thinking deeply about your cousin Minnie. I’m sure you’ve seen on Facebook that she likes to practice this woman-to-woman thing...” I take a sip of tea (with a shot of whiskey) and wonder, Where is this going? “Arit, you don’t have to copy what Minnie is doing. Ok?”

I haven’t spoken to Minnie in five years.

Friday

She breathes into the receiver before saying anything. I wait. “Maybe you’ve been away too long? You’ve been sounding different. Come home. Please.”

Saturday

“Should I tell your father?” she asks, though her question doesn’t feel like an ask. “I don’t like keeping secrets. Arit, you have put your Mama in a terrible situation. Please fix your morality dear, I’m begging.” I scream at the phone. YOU KEEP SECRETS ALL THE TIME.

Sunday

Her voice sounds frail.
“I love you.”



“It’s pure theater!” Nkechi eagerly listens to Mom’s messages while eating a beef burrito. “She’s an artist — but then again — what Nigerian Mom isn’t?” She hands back the phone. After nights of swimming in blood and drowning, I tell her everything. The phone call with Mom. The Facebook photo. The dreadful messages. Everything.

“What picture did she see, anyway?” Nkechi asks.

“The one of us at the parade where I had that rainbow skirt on.”

“Got it.” She nods, giving me a “that sucks” look. “No one should call you out for wearing a rainbow. How sacrilegious.”

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

“I don’t know what to do.”

“Do you, boo.” Nkechi sits back and swallows the last bite of burrito. “They don’t pay for your flights home, and they don’t buy your hair.”

“I’m gonna keep eating carbs and sugar until I feel better.”

“Not with your fibroids. Don’t become a sadomasochist. Girl, just tell the truth.”

“I’m not sure what truth to tell.”

She flashes me a glance and takes a sip of Coke. “Yes, you do.”

Nkechi. Life heightens when she’s around. Like that day at the parade, it was already a day full of color and glee, but when she arrived everything got brighter. She had a Grace Jones haircut with those three-dollar biker shorts she got at our favorite thrift store.

Folks danced in the street, and someone wrapped me in a magenta feather boa. Nkechi threw glitter, and for a good hour, I thought I was trapped inside an Instagram photo. Vivid. That’s her. She makes reality an HD experience.

She’s a heightener in her family too. Once, she barged in on her family during a prayer (her family prays like they’re in the last days too) and said, “Look, don’t expect any children ‘cause nothing is coming out this canal and don’t expect a husband ‘cause marriage is for fools.”

She then pointed her finger directly at her parents, as if she was the adult. “And don’t try talking me out of it. We’re in America, and I’m gonna suck all the power I can from this country before I twirl back to my homeland.”

After much silence, her Mom — Mrs. Odegbami — became equally sassy and yelled, “Your very style of dress says that you are of the flamboyant variety! May you be washed in the blood of Christ as you make a mockery of everything I’ve tried to teach you!” Then she stood up and gave her daughter a kiss on the cheek. “I only pray that life isn’t too hard for you. It’s hard enough.”

I wouldn’t have believed this story, that her parents were this accepting, but she still lives at home, parties late into the night, changes her hair every two weeks, and smokes weed in the house (but only in her room with the window open). Twerk on Friday. Energy healing on Saturday. Church on Sunday. Works for me.

I never understood why everyone expected Nigerians to be so dramatic until I met this family and thought I had entered into a Nollywood movie.

Nkechi’s Mom wears a long blonde weave, looking like she’s ready to faint (or wanting to faint) just cause life is that dramatic. The father is usually sitting somewhere in the corner, dosing off. All the while, people scuffle through the apartment from morning to night.

I grew up on the east coast in a forest. Lots of quiet. Lots of brevity. Little color.

I look at Nkechi. “I wish your life would rub off on mine.”

“What does that mean?” she asked.

“I mean, you know who you are. I worry so much that I don’t know if I’m anything other than the worry.” Nkechi flashed me another look, a bit softer.

“I might tell them what I think but I toe the line. I’ll probably be that weird aunt everyone loves but secretly thinks, wow, her life is ruined. That’s the part I’ve been cast in. I’d never do what you’ve done. Leave my family? No way,” she said. “You’re brave.”

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

I laughed in utter disbelief. “Brave?” I shrieked.

“All I feel is grief.”



Where I come from, fervent prayer is the cure for all human folly. When Aunt Nancy heard about Uncle Emem’s porn addiction, she sent him away (to a motel somewhere), packed up her rambunctious kids, and drove from Hartford, Connecticut to my Mom’s prayer circle. It was held once a month for Nigerian women wanting to pray and link arms.

They prayed morning, noon and night that day. I looked forward to this gathering ’cause it brought all of the children together. For one day, it was like Nigeria had descended upon our home. It was the Nigeria I watched on Nollywood, the one where I imagined people wearing perfume and cologne, where the women wore fancy head wraps, and large voices devoured the quietness. I’m not sure what Nigeria is when you’ve been living in the woods in another country for most of your life. But this Nigeria everyone connected with — the gregariousness and large displays of affection — was the one everyone seemed to recognize.

When my aunt visited, I relished the way us children were allowed to play freely. We’d tiptoe through the palo where our mothers linked arms and bowed their heads, rustle for food in the kitchen, and then dash for the yard with a handful of chin-chin, howling into the forest. Our mothers were simmering with a mysterious something that none of us understood. I barely knew the home language — the language they prayed in — so what were they praying for, for hours on end?

We took any opportunity to leave the house and shout outside. Our voices echoed through the tall oak trees as we impersonated superheroes, Spiderman, Batman, Catwoman, Storm, The Incredible Hulk; all of us wanted to save someone and play larger-than-life characters. If my father had seen me, I would have been spanked for not being a good girl, which to him meant remaining quiet and watchful. To have a daughter that dared to scream in a neighborhood where people walked their dogs, rode their bikes, and took note of everything was a travesty.

Thankfully, the women praying always seemed to keep my father and his temper at bay. He’d simply grunt, “Someone call me when the room is cleared,” and retreat to his room. After all the prayers, Uncle Emem returned a few weeks later, promising he’d give up porn and talk to the pastor about rededicating his life to Christ. The women were convinced their prayers had made the difference, but I think it was the fact that Aunt Nancy kicked him out, cut him off from his children, and was the breadwinner of the family. He came back to the path of righteousness. That’s what Mom said.

When Mom’s father got diagnosed with brain cancer, she went to Nigeria to pray for him. Her entire family prayed every day at 9 am, 12 noon, and 3 pm for the two straight. Grandpa died a month later, and for some reason, Mom still prays for his recovery. She believes everyone needs prayers, whether they’re dead or living.

Mom prayed for my human folly too. When I was in high school, I took to wearing halter tops because that’s what all the girls wore. From the day she caught me, I wore long-sleeved shirts in ninety-degree weather. “You’re a good girl. You’re good,” Mom said, taking me by the face with tears in her eyes. “You’re good,” she repeated. That night I passed her room and stopped when I heard my name between words from the home language and bits of English. Arit... make her good, Lord. Make her good... My face grew damp with tears. A terrible feeling took hold of me, a feeling that someone had cast a spell behind my back.

She gave God a message about who I was without any chance of me stating my piece. I realized that she had something over me, something that could very well kill me if I wasn’t careful — intention. She had a vision of me that always seemed to result in my being bad, or being someone who either needed saving or was at risk of punishment. I had a father who would slap me for any small infraction — not sweeping the steps right, daring to go to a friend’s birthday party, burning the plantain, the list went on.

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

It was like I couldn't catch a break and all that time I had thought it was my fault. But when I had caught her, my fears about her role in the matter were confirmed. She would most likely pray to God about my heathen tendencies before jumping in to stop a hand from slapping my face.

That night I wanted to pray, not because I believed that God would save me, but because I needed someone to hear my side. When she told God "make her good," I wanted to counter with, "I'm not bad." I realized that the primary authority figure in my life was not praying for anything that would free me from my pain, because she fundamentally thought that I was a pain.

If this was her primary concern over my life — this prayer — spoken thousands of times to the Almighty, then no wonder life was so difficult. I didn't know if I had the conviction to pray the way my mother did. That night my father and his rage faded into the background, and my mother and her prayers came center stage. I guess she had a direct hotline to phone God in and say, this is who she is, but if anyone had asked me, I'd tell God: "This woman keeps interfering with my nature, and I don't know what to do." But that night I didn't plead my case. I simply cried into my pillow, believing that if Mom thought I was bad, then any cruelty I endured was definitely my fault.



I eat an enormous amount of macaroons with no taste. A bright fuchsia cookie ought to splash a berry goodness in your mouth. A tartness in the middle. A crunchy coat to sweeten the deal. I can't describe what nothing tastes like. It's more of a feeling. Imagine, your mouth salivating, your tongue clicking against the roof of your mouth, sticky spit and a salty tongue wagging in your mouth, and something fragrant (let's say a roast) under your nose that's teasing you, because however good it smells, you can't taste it. I devour more cookies, eat through the blandness, grab the purple macaroon, then a green one, a tangerine, a yellow, a royal blue. I eat until I hear someone in the distance swear in my direction. It sounds like swearing, the timbre of it, disdainful. I'd rather eat through the blandness, but I hear her.

"How dare you blacken this royal house and your good name with such scandal?!" Mom asks, taking a bite of Charlotte Russe.

I look down at my place setting. A pile of colored French cookies sitting on a plate. The fork is there, and I see the woman staring at me with a smile. "We all have to toe the line." She reaches her hand through the fork and begins reaching for my plate. "Hand me a macaroon, girl. This gonna be a long night." I give her a nice yellow one.

"Well," Mom says. "What do you have to say for yourself?" I look down at the woman in the fork eating the macaroon. She looks to be wearing a Victorian dress with her hair now streaked yellow.

"Just tell them," she says. "Tell them you're different and that you're gonna stay at the table. Like me." She chomps away, pleased with herself.

"Doesn't this macaroon taste good?" she says in delight. I nod my head in agreement, not knowing why. Suddenly I get some taste from the bits of cookie in my mouth. Dirt. It tastes like dirt.



Here are three things I don't like about Nkechi. One. She's stupid. Or maybe she's psycho, but whatever she is, I find myself looking at her and thinking she's an absolute heathen. Nkechi's ability to heighten a situation can be a good thing or a bad thing. Usually it feels mostly bad. I'll never forget that time she walked the streets with lime green spandex, a crop top and four-inch heels. She walked like this through the Tenderloin, the Haight, the Financial District, and the Castro. Past whistling men, past haughty women, past children, past police officers, past the wind, past the rain, past the sun, and past all reason. I offered her a coat, a blazer, a sweater, a scarf, but she refused.

She'd laugh, that cackling laugh. "All I have to do is be Black, pay my taxes, and die." *Does she have any idea who she is on this street?* "Stop worrying all the time," she said. "You got to raise your vibration in these streets and rise above the foolery, girl. Whether you live or die."

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

Two. She's a shit starter. Last week we were waiting at the BART, and a shifty-looking man bumped into her. Nkechi snapped. "I'm standing here, idiot!" Now, it's eleven at night, we passed a man shooting up walking down the steps, and I have no interest in losing my life inside a train station. Nkechi knows this, but she doesn't care. This man doesn't scare me one bit. He wouldn't be the first shifty man I survived. But she — Nkechi — frightened me that day. She always carries pepper spray, a pocket knife, and a punch wherever she goes.

The man's mouth is fowl, and I'm sure I hate him. He starts talking. Fuck you, you bitch this, you Black this, you c*!% this, you roach this...

I send hand gestures and side-eyes her way, motioning for her to cool it, but she's ready to pounce.

"You don't want none of dis at this unholy hour. I will cut you!"

He moved closer. No one's around, and anyone nearby had headphones in, their faces buried in a book, or a cell phone recording the whole shebang.

"If he touches you, I'll hurt him!" I screamed. "Walk away. Please."

His attention turned towards me. Fuck you, you bitch this, you Black this, you c*!% this, you roach this. I wanted to throw him on the train rails. Hopefully, only a few of his bones would break. What's a few broken limbs for someone who has the devil in him? Nkechi laughed in his direction, that cackling laugh.

"I will fling you across this platform. No joke, motherfucker."

He spat in her direction. Threw his entire head back to do it. The sticky yuck blob landed on her blouse. For a moment, she looked like a hurt kid. I stepped in. Slapped him. Twice. The shock sent him lumbering down towards the other side of the station.

"All the things we got to live with in this country," she said, rustling for a napkin in her backpack. "I should have kicked him in the balls. He lucky I'm not that fucked up on Jack. If I was, it would be over." I searched my bag for a napkin to give her.

"You were livid," she said. "Did you hear what you were saying? With the way you were yelling, I thought you'd hit me too." There was nothing to lose in that situation. I could hit him, and no one would intervene saying, "Don't hit that man, because he is so and so." But what Nkechi did that day... she could have got hurt. I could have slapped her for her recklessness, but I loved her. She a liability though.

Three. She knows I don't like her. I can love a thing, but not really like that same thing. I love her because she reminds me of home and she knows me from the inside out. She's gotten the closest, out of all of them, even more than any lover I've had. Up until three days ago, I was with someone named Jamal. A brother who always wears a five o'clock shadow. I considered sending a picture of us to Mom, hoping she'd accept this part of me. But then Jamal decided to pop up at my apartment with a Hamburg pizza. He was proud of his attempt at surprise, but didn't see how destructive his behavior was. Any chance we had ended with that silly gesture. I don't like people in my space like that. Drop over and not give anybody notice? Who raised him? Truth is, I was waiting for a reason to dump him. Every time he commented on my looks — you're great looking, you're beautiful, and I really like you — I wanted to hand him a cardboard cutout of myself and say, "Why don't you date her."

I told Nkechi this and she shook her head. "You take being alone to whole 'nother level, girl." Then she mentioned the girl I dated a few months back. Sarah Jane. A high-brow type from Napa Valley. She was trying to defy her father's expectations by working at a shelter. We were similar in some ways and could relate to growing up in the woods. Nkechi hated how vanilla she was, but since it got me out on Friday nights, she soon approved. Sarah Jane and I met at some professional event. She kept calling, I finally gave in, and we began dating. Two months later, Sarah Jane wanted to take me for lunch with her best friend, Martha. I ended it a day later.

Itoro Bassey

The Outing

Nkechi asked why, and I said, “Never liked her name.” I’ll never forget how my best friend grabbed my hand to give it a squeeze. “I want you to know that I like you and love you.”

“Ok,” I replied.

“I’m gonna like you and love you until you learn how to like and love yourself.”

She’s kind to me, and I love her, but I’ve never loved or liked a thing at the same time. And I certainly couldn’t like someone who’s half heathen.



To love a thing but not like a thing is perfectly sane in this kinda world. A world where people love but don’t like, or like but don’t love, or simply hate. I was a quiet girl. A shy girl. Meek. That was me. I didn’t want to hurt nobody. I just wanted to be who I was, whatever that was, but in this trip of a world. I’m lucky. Lucky I’m anything at all. It started with the day someone looked my way and said, you’re pretty. It was a curse. Don’t care what nobody says about the beautiful finishing first. It was. After that, the voices never stopped.

You pretty. Listen well. Pretty girls kiss men. Strong men. Big men. Like that one there. Wait. Not him. He White. He White-o. We don’t want no wahala now. Too much to explain. Find a Black. No African-born Black. Won’t understand you. Don’t make him angry. If he hits you, it’s over. Remember. Divorce is a sin. And you pretty. So pretty. Wait. You not pretty. Blacky. Lips too big. Hair too coiled. Ass too small. And you frown. Why frown? You pretty. So pretty. Wait. Why wear that? Show your legs. They nice. Wait. Why show your body? You a whore? Whore. Wait. You pretty. So pretty. Why wear baggy clothes? Wear a dress. Why you crying? Don’t cry. You sensitive. Stop. Wait. I love you. Fool. Why you silent? Speak. Speak smart. Better than everybody. Not better than me. Sit down. What you say? Shut up. You too loud. No one will listen. You fucked up. For all of us. Wait. I adore you. Don’t you know? Where’s my credit? For loving you? You pretty. So pretty. Be strong. Kiss men. Pray hard. Sit in the corner. Amen.



The dream goes something like this. I wake up and see there’s no food or drink on the table. I know other people are there, but I only see my mother, my father, and the woman laughing in the spoon.

“Well?” my mother says, “What do you say for yourself?”

I look from the spoon to my mother, and then to my father. “I love you, but I don’t like you,” I say. “Never have. And that’s the truth.”

Everyone disappears, and a plate of kale with roast potatoes appears on the table. I know the kale was lightly sautéed in coconut oil and the potatoes are seasoned with turmeric because this is a meal I would prepare in my waking life. I’d prefer a chocolate chip cookie, but I realize that this is the meal that will keep me alive. A woman laughs in the distance, and I wonder if it is my voice I am hearing or the voice I’ve always been afraid to listen to.



Senzelokuhle Mpumelelo Nkabini

Senzelokuhle Mpumelelo Nkabini was born and bred in a small town called Estcourt, located in the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa. His work focuses on rurality, sexuality, gender and culture. He can be contacted via email at senzelokuhle@gmail.com

Senzelokuhle Mpumelelo Nkabini

Thabo

Stabane. This seven letter word is all that Thabo can think of while walking barefoot past the abandoned mud-huts at the border of Majokweni Village. He is heading towards the scorched dry veld that has been colonised by knee-high golden grass and brown whistling thorn trees. Children are shouting behind him “*THAAABO... THAAABO... BUUUYAAA!*”² He ignores them. This word has cut through his chest like a sharp knife and left him speechless. The sharp tone and humiliating laughter that cradled the word as it voluntarily left the perpetrator’s cracked lips have sent Thabo bolting for mercy. He stops, looks behind, no one’s following him. He looks up, and a soft voice escapes his brown chapped lips, “Good”.³

Thabo was born on the 12th of October 2009 at 03:00 am in MaDlamini’s hut, the village *sangoma*. His conception was what the village grapevine described as abnormal, divisive and immoral. Thabo’s mother was in a sexual relationship with her Indian employer while working as the family’s housekeeper. This later resulted in the conception of Thabo, who while still growing in his mother’s womb, had no father come forth to acknowledge and claim him as his own. Culturally, for Thabo’s mother, this meant that *inhlawulo* would not be paid for her son. Thus, he would never be able to use his father’s surname, nor ever be acknowledged by his paternal family.

Feelings of disgust and shame visited his mother on a daily basis due to the judgement and humiliation she encountered from her own family and community. Her son’s life was already filled with turmoil and resentment before she gave birth to him. Sadly, it became even worse after he was born. His soft black curly hair and light brown caramel skin are still a constant reminder to the community of how he was conceived. Despite speaking IsiZulu fluently and herding cattle with the other boys in the village, he is still regarded as different, “other”, *ikula*, and not seen as part of the community. A forced laugh always seems to make it easier to swallow the racist comments about his hair and ethnicity. Yet today, the word *stabane* has crumbled him and penetrated his heavily guarded heart.

After walking for what seems to be an eternity, Thabo finds himself standing *eMaweni* (at the cliffs). *EMaweni* is the place where lightning from the heavens strikes the rocks on the edge of the cliff during a thunderstorm. He has walked beyond the borders of his small village and ended up *la ekudlalela khona izulu* (at the place where the heavens meet).

He sobs a little, looks down, and then sees, maybe, a body far down below, and the rocks that have been shattered apart by lightning. He tries to sit down, but the surface on the cliff is hard. He then tries to manoeuvre himself to a more comfortable position. Then silence... he’s frozen, and his eyes are fixed on a hazy image in-between the sooty rocks and fulgurite bits. He wipes his eyes and looks again. Still not clear. He leans forward to get a better view, but still can’t see the object clearly. He kneels on the rock and places both hands in front of him. Slo-o-o-o-o-o-wly, he leans even closer to the edge of the cliff. Still, *ayibonakali kahle lento elaphaya phansi ngase hlahleni* (he can’t clearly see the object that is down there in-between the trees).

But, yes... Now he can see. A person! What a mangled state!

He looks up, puzzled and disturbed, puts his left hand above his eyebrows in order to block out the strong rays of the African sun, and uses his right hand to balance his body. He fixates more intently on another object in-between the trees ahead. Silence... until a soft voice escapes his brown chapped lips, “Are those fee... feet?” Standing there firmly? He looks down again at the spread-eagled ruin below; no accident.

Notes

1 *Stabane*: A disparaging IsiZulu word used in South Africa, to define and marginalise individuals who are romantically or sexually attracted to the same sex, as well as transgender and intersex people.

2 *BUUUYAAA!*: COME BACK!

3 *sangoma*: A traditional medical practitioner in South Africa who can also facilitate communication with their patients’ ancestors. *Sangomas* are bestowed with the power to heal illnesses using herbs, water, prayer and music with different musical instruments to execute the healing process.

4 *inhlawulo*: This is payment in the form of livestock (cows or goats) or money, which is paid by the father of the child to the family of the woman he impregnated. The father does this to acknowledge the child as his own, and also to admit he was partially wrong for impregnating the woman out of wedlock.

5 *ikula*: The word is derived from the English term “coolie”, a derogatory expression used to label South African Indians.

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Plays

Andi Colombo



Andi Colombo completed her degree (honours equivalent) in Theatre Making at the University of Cape Town in 2017, with distinctions in drama, theatre making and performance. Andi considers herself fortunate to work diversely in the field of performance making. She moves among the roles of directing, acting, live art performance, playwriting, lighting design, and stage and production managing. As a playwright, Andi has had several of her works presented professionally, including PAN (winner of Best Script at the Zabalaza Festival), AMES, and Like Hamlet. Instagram: @andiicolombo. Facebook: @colomboandi.

Louise Bruwer



Louise Bruwer is an award-winning editor and filmmaker whose work has expanded across the borders of commercials, short films, documentaries, and music videos. Her work is signitured by her eccentric attitude and sensual nuances coupled with her hands-on and open-minded work ethic. Louise is represented by Butterfly Films Cape Town (butterflyfilms.com) as a producer, editor and director. She recently produced and edited the short film Sanguine, which won Best Film at the Cape Town 48 Hour Film Project Awards. The photography here presented by Louise is of scenes from Andi Colombo's Like Hamlet. Instagram: [@louise.bruwer](https://www.instagram.com/louise.bruwer)

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Introduction

This play is not *Hamlet*. It holds only a vague resemblance. It is possibly, only slightly like *Hamlet*.

Like Hamlet is a postmodern, poetic interpretation of Shakespeare’s classic text, *Hamlet*, which lifts four key characters, namely, Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, and Claudius, out of the context of the play and into a liminal, cyclical space, where all their human emotions, such as lust, betrayal, love and jealousy, become magnified.

These characters find themselves speaking through, against, around and away from one another, exploring the dualities of light and darkness, truth and deceit, voice and the body. *Like Hamlet* was borne out of a desire to see what the characters in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* would do in other spaces, how they would operate divorced from their context, and what would happen if the characters in *Hamlet* were given an opportunity to speak for themselves, and speak truthfully to their feelings.

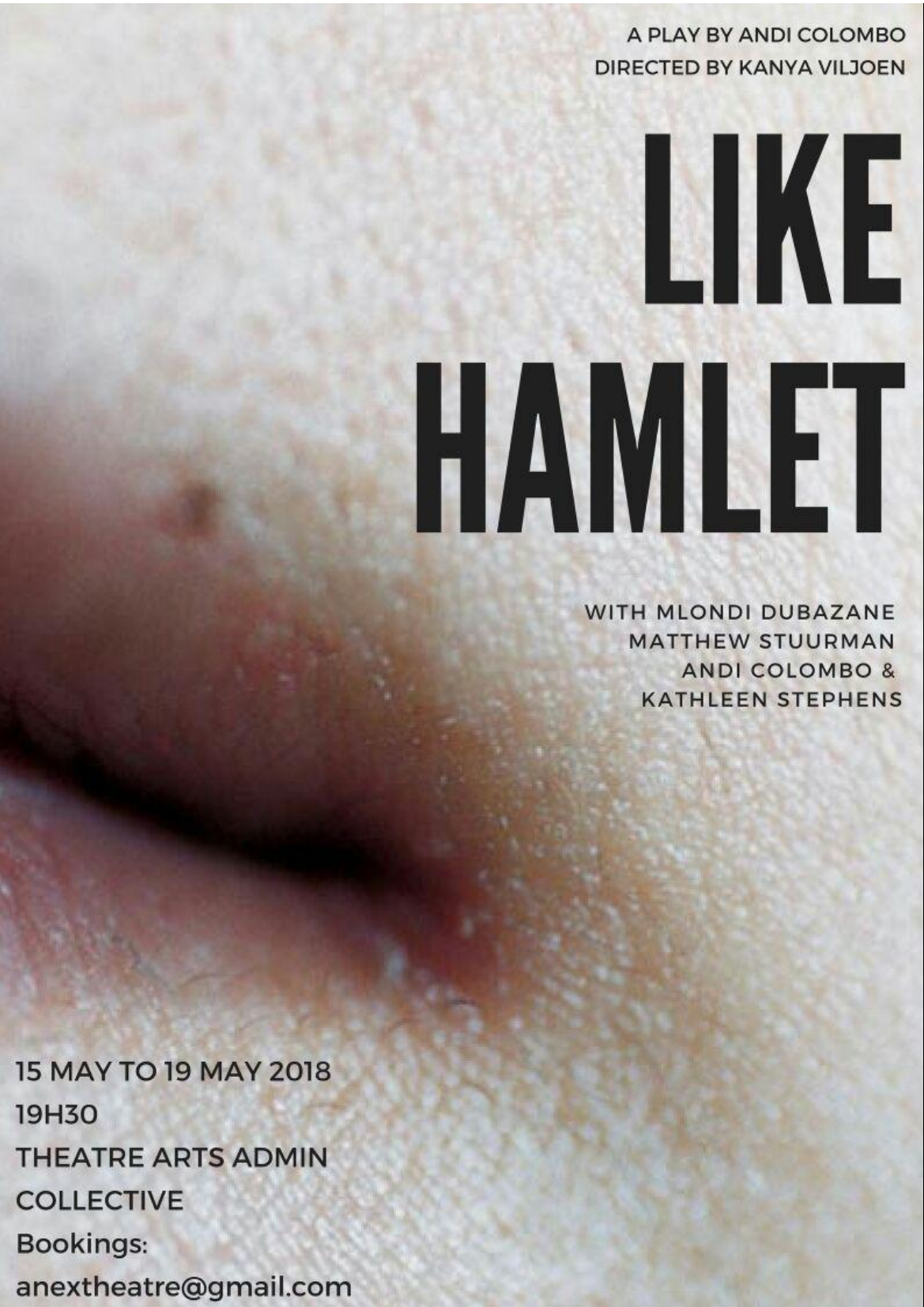
The play explores longing, desire, intimacy, anger and mourning, not only within the written language, but within the body itself. Finally, what remains is the question of what it means to love, to give of self, to breathe within the spaces found between two bodies, to find space within your own body.

Production history

Like Hamlet was staged by the Anex Theatre Production company from 15 to 19 May 2018 at the Theatre Arts Admin Collective, a lively performing arts centre in Observatory, Cape Town. The play was directed by Kanya Viljoen and Roxanne Rose Modricky served as stage manager. It starred **Andi Colombo**, **Kathleen Stephens**, **Matthew Stuurman**, and **Mlondi Dubazane**. In her review of the play for *WeekendSpecial*, Kat Manne commented, "*Like Hamlet* was an intense and highly surprising play, showcasing the disturbed and conflicted psyche we are used to seeing in *Hamlet* manifesting in those around him."

Characters

Hamlet
Ophelia
Gertrude
Claudius



Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

I

It is dark. Silence.

In the distance, someone is singing.¹

Silence again.

A tap drips three times. Then again.

Someone clears their throat.

In the distance, someone is singing.

Hamlet: *(Lit suddenly from a distance)* In the distance someone is singing. I can hear the vowels, empty and whole at the same time.

The singing stops. It is dark again.

Hamlet: *(Lit suddenly from very close)* The singing stops.

Ophelia is in a room with four mirrors. She can't look at herself.

Ophelia: It is raining.

Engorged drops

Pry loose from hot tar

The warm damp smell of Sauna

Sundays.

Of dancing in the rain dodging bullets

Dodging droplets

'Til mother-calls cut through the balmy air

and you slide inside

dodging the flu and wet clothes.

She lifts her shirt. Suddenly naked.

Suddenly naked I find you here

Suddenly naked

All at once and suddenly

She puts her hand to the mirror closest to her. Smearing her reflection.

It's very hot here.

I hold the heat in my belly

It bleeds out down my legs

It touches my ankles

It streams in rivulets

It fills my socks

A torch shines into one mirror, reflected in the others, obscuring her figure.

Suddenly naked.

Like feet unclothed on the beach sand.

In the distance, Hamlet is singing. The song stops abruptly, mid-note, in ellipsis. It never completes itself.

Beat.

There is darkness.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

II

Gertrude: *(Emerging out of the gloom)* Hamlet? Hamlet?

She is knitting furiously, dropping stitches, wool tangles around her hands like bloody intestines. She does not see the needles, only knits, as if her hands are apart from her body.

The taste of cold iron
Like a gun in my mouth
Like bullets sliding over my palate
The blood
Seeps from the tooth marks in my tongue
When I see you
Hamlet?
I would like to
Ha...

The knitting travels up over her head, threads around her throat and yet she keeps knitting.

Hang me upside down in frozen dreams I am for you I am for you please help me ha... ha...
Hamlet hand me my gun I want to taste the blood running down my hands Hamlet, ha...

It won't come clean
It won't come clean
It won't come
Come
Come
Cum

The knitting trembles.

The blood circles the drain
Let my eyes see nothing but circling blood
Let my heart hold heavy
Let me
Hang me
Hold me
Hold me by the skin of my neck
Like a kitten
With less innocence,
Hamlet.
Hamlet?

The knitting falls. Her hands are between her legs.

(Softly) Like a kitten
Like a pussy cat
Like your mother,
Only yours.
Like my breast which hangs loose
Like my hair which strokes
The nape of my neck
Like my breath which caresses the rain
Like my breath which steams the window
Like my breath
ragged on his chest.



Images:
Louise Bruwer

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

III

Claudius: *(Watching Gertrude)* Why are you here?

Gertrude: *(Vocal)* Mmm.

Hamlet and Ophelia are apart. Gertrude is watching.

Ophelia: Hamlet? *(Her words materialize before her)*

I like the way you catch sunlight in your eyes.

I've been trying to word this.

I think you are crisp sheets

And my crumpled skin dreams of lying next to you

I think you are supple shoes

Buttery leather and your naked sole.

Hamlet: Your eyes are as bright as a full moon burning

And as deep as lake waters churning below my feet as I

Dangle

Catching glimpses of the spaces between your knuckles

The vulnerable skin curves there

I want to fill up all the cracks in your skin

I want to trace the space between your fingers

I want you to tell me again that my eyes are a lake full of stars

Burning and rippling on the surface of the water

Like your desire for me

Hamlet

Like your mad desire for me

Hamlet

Ophelia continues to write Hamlet's name, her hand running away in chalky obsession.

Hamlet: What do you want me to say?

Ophelia: What do you want to say?

Beat.

Hamlet: Ophelia.

Beat.

Your name makes me think of jumping off of high-rise buildings

Of opium scents in the public bathrooms of youth

Of sunrises over the sleeping bodies of cities

Ophelia

I am trying to write you

I am trying to write you poetry

I am trying to say that your hands hold me in stillness when I see them

When I see

Long fingers

I imagine your fingers in my hair, Ophelia.

Your long fingers,

Your long fingers supporting my head, which gets so heavy

Ophelia.

I am trying to take deeper breaths, because you're living in my clavicle

I want to wash myself clean for you

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

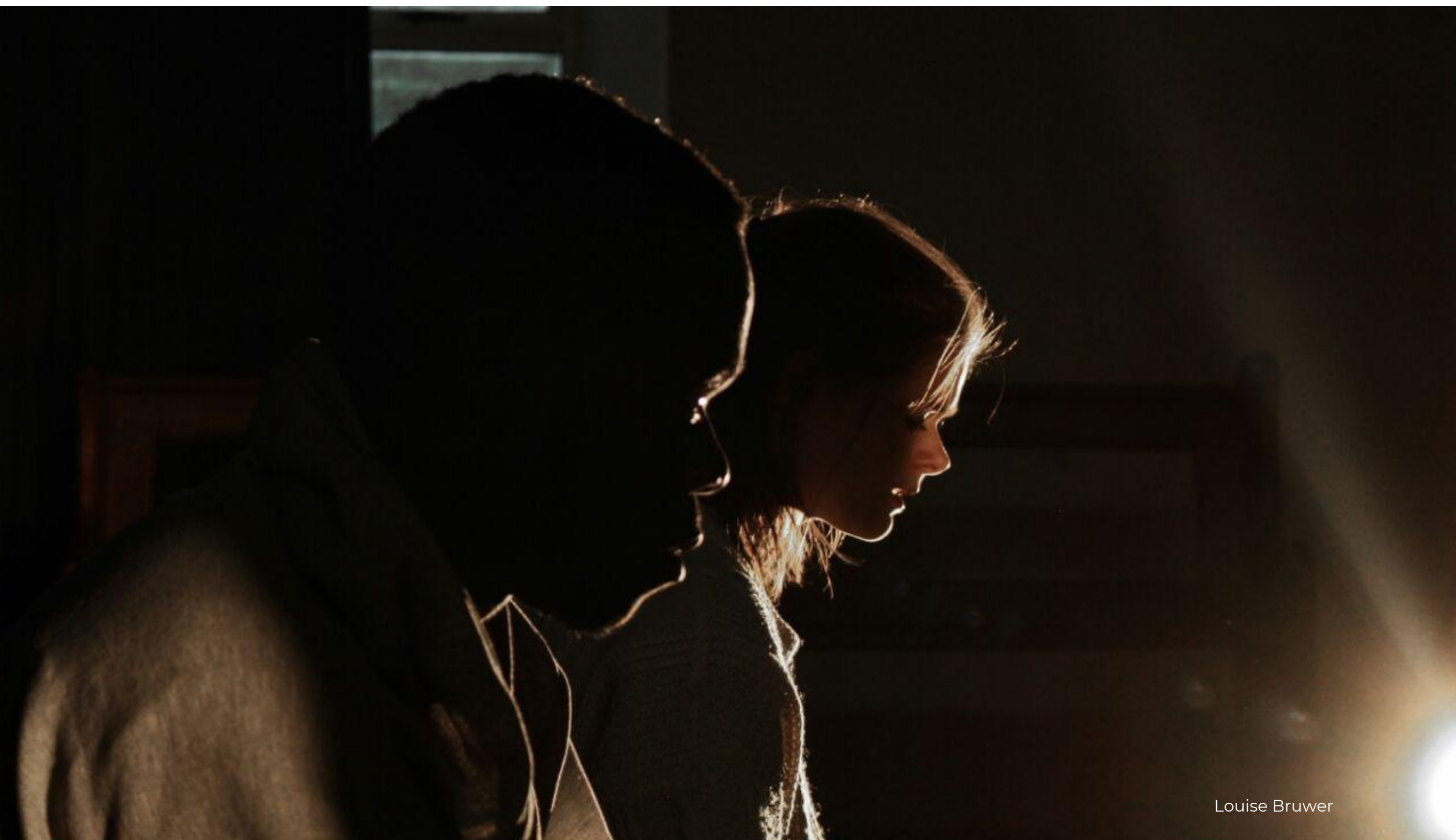
I want to live inside a sauna for you and sweat out all the dirt
That I have carried for so many years
I want to scrub away my filthy genes for you
I want to breathe out the air that she gave me
I want to breathe you in,
Ophelia.
I find your scent clinging to me
I turn my head and smell you in the air my hair leaves behind
Ophelia
I want to smell you on my sheets
I want to wrap you up in crisp sheets and save you from the dirt of the world
I want to live in a glass box with you
I want to see you bloom...
in a glass box with you,
I want to bloom with you.
I want to live in a glass box with you.
I want to let the sun shine on your skin
So smooth
I want to let my hands slide slippery on your body
I want to make myself clean for you
I want to be clean enough for your love
I want to be enough for your love
I want to be clean
I want to be enough
I want to be enough

Beat.

Hamlet: What do you want to say?

Ophelia: What do you want me to say?

Ophelia continues writing Hamlet's name, starts rubbing it out and correcting it, smearing it, altering it. Darkness falls. She sings and writes Hamlet's name. Her voice is as clean as a cat's.²



Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

IV

Claudius is watching Gertrude.

She holds her hands in front of her. Her hands dance, coupled and uncoupled, like leaves circling in the air around each other as they fall from high-up branches, rejected by the tree that grew them.

Claudius: I found you long ago behind my eyelids, in the circles left by lights that burned my retinas.
Gertrude.

I see you spill from the cracks in my ceiling while I'm trying to sleep.

Gertrude?

Can you see me Gertrude?

Gertrude watches her own hands, holding.

I see you in the skies stretched like skin over the horizon, I hold you
soft against my skin, I feel you forbidden, I feel you forbidden between
my fingers, I feel you forbidden, Gertrude.

Can you be mine please?

Can I call you mine?

Gertrude doesn't answer.

Can I call you?

Can I

Can

Is it possible to hold somebody in the palm of your hand?

Is it possible to hold your body all at once,

I want to swallow you whole.

Gertrude?

Can you see me

Gertrude?

Gertrude: *(Not looking at Claudius)* I can see you Claudius.

Claudius: Can you see me Gertrude?

Gertrude: *(Not looking at Claudius)* I can see you Claudius.

Claudius: I will keep watching you Gertrude.

Gertrude: *(Not looking at Claudius)* I can see you Claudius.

Claudius: Gertrude, can you see me?

Gertrude: *(Looking into Claudius' eyes)* I can see you.

Claudius leaves.

Claudius watches Gertrude from a distance.

Gertrude: *(Calling out to Ophelia:)* Their eyes are the same, did you know?

All of them

Men.

I see only pigmented holes into their souls

I see

But I can't look at them

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Hamlet has such beautiful eyes, did you know?
Did you know?
Did you know, you filthy bitch?
Did you know?

Gertrude's hands begin to dance, leaves falling dead.

One's as good as the other,
One's as good as the other, did you know?

She sings, a song half-remembered and then again forgotten.
Beat.

Ophelia: I was right.

Gertrude: I know.

Claudius: *(From a distance)* ... Driven by a mainspring
which must be wound regularly.
Tight. Tightly wound.
The force is relayed through a series of gears
to power a weighted wheel
which oscillates back and forth.
which oscillates back and forth at a constant rate.

(To Gertrude:) Can you see me?

Beat.

Why are you here?

V

Gertrude cannot hear him.

Hamlet is cleaning. Brushstrokes and soapy suds. Ophelia leaves a trail of mud.

Ophelia: I threw you into the sea. I held on so tightly that I let you go. I held on so tightly.
We can look, but we can't touch,
or own,
or hold,
or belong,
anywhere.
I held,
I was still holding,
after you scraped yourself away
long after
after,
and nothing on my fingertips and nothing left to throw and still you here, still everything, still throbbing,
still throbbing, distant.

Gertrude begins to dance. Hamlet watches her.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

VI

Gertrude: *(Laughing)* Did you know?

Beat.

(To Ophelia:) What?

Ophelia: You know what.

Beat.

Ophelia: I was right.

Gertrude: I know.

Ophelia: He was right.

Gertrude: I know.

Ophelia: I'm... *(Begins to say:)* sorry...

Gertrude: *(Interrupting)* Don't.

Beat.

Gertrude: Perhaps...?

Ophelia: No.

Beat.

Have you...

Gertrude: No.

Ophelia: Oh.

Beat.

Gertrude: When I lie underwater,
I try to see how long I can hold my breath.
They say it's
euphoric.

Ophelia: I'd never come up.

Gertrude: Perhaps.

Ophelia: No. I don't know if I'd ever...

Gertrude: I do, every time.

Beat.

What?

Ophelia: You know what.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Beat.

Gertrude: To never come up.

Ophelia: What?

Gertrude: That moment.

Ophelia: Clarity.

Gertrude: Perhaps.

Ophelia: Mmm.

Beat.

Like that moment just before touch. Like just before.

Gertrude: Perhaps...

Ophelia: No.

Gertrude: Perhaps.

Ophelia: No.
I'm... *(Begins to say:)* sorry

Gertrude: *(Interrupting)* don't.

Beat.

Gertrude: Perhaps.

Ophelia: Perhaps.

Gertrude turns towards Claudius. Claudius joins Gertrude. They are dancing very closely. Ophelia watches. Hamlet cleans, and cleans, until...



Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

VII

Hamlet: *(All at once, words retch out of his body)*... When I was younger, my dad took me to a concert
I sat high on his shoulders
So clean and clear at the top of the universe
I could hear the crowd below me
But I was growing taller
and
He was holding me down
I was a balloon straining
Pulling against his neck like a
Dog on a leash
Pulling against his neck like a
Stuffed toy dangling by one ear
From the hand of a sleeping child
Swinging gently with the rhythm of their breath
Pulling against his neck
like a noose

Gertrude: *(Moving further away from Claudius)* Hamlet?
Do you remember as a child when you would lie
On the backseat of the car
And listen to the sea go by
And watch the stars stay still
And us moving
And us driving
Do you remember Hamlet?
And you would pretend to be asleep, so I would carry you inside
Lifting you from the back of my car

Claudius pulls her quickly very close to him, she exhales and speaks muffled against his chest.

Oh! –
Sometimes you did sleep
Do you remember Hamlet?
Do you remember?
With the stars staying still and us moving
And us moving under the blanket of stars
Sometimes I would take the long way home Hamlet
Just to feel

Claudius lifts Gertrude on top of him

Your leaden body, heavy with sleep,
In my arms
Against my breast
So heavy
Hanging
Hamlet?
Do you remember?

Hamlet scrubs with more fervour, begins to sing, trying to remember a song buried deep inside the past, pulling out fragments.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

VIII

Claudius: Driven by a mainspring
which must be
Tightly wound.
The force relayed through a series of gears
powers a wheel
which oscillates back and forth.
Why are you here?

Gertrude: Because you spoke first.

IX

Claudius dances with Gertrude, gently now, spinning around and around like a ballerina in a jewellery box.

He speaks softly to her, only just audible.

Claudius: Gertrude, I like your fingernails
I like how they arch
Like the small of your back in the midst of ecstasy
I like the sliver of white rim at the tip
I like your fingernails and how they curve like the conch shell of your ear
I hold your hand to my ear and hear the sea atop your fingertips
Gertrude
I am drowning
Baby
I am drowning
I breathe underwater but I can't find you there.
Gertrude?
It's flooding and I can't find you.
I can't find you.
Are you floating?
Are you with his ghostly life raft?
Are you floating?
Are you still hanging on to him?

Gertrude: *(Turning away from him, picking up her knitting, swaying to the sound of Hamlet's rhythmic scrubbing)* No.

Claudius: Are you still hanging on to him?

Gertrude: No.

Claudius: Are you still hanging on to him?

Gertrude: No.

Claudius: Baby, am I pathetic?

Gertrude knits.

Claudius: Am I pathetic?

Gertrude knits.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Claudius: Gertrude, hang on to me

Beat.

Hang on to me

Beat.

Let me be a life raft. I'm sinking.

Beat.

I'll count to ten. I'll wait for you.

Gertrude: Hamlet?

Claudius: I'll count to ten. I'll wait for you.

Gertrude: Hamlet?

She watches.

X

Hamlet: Are you okay?

Ophelia: Ja. Are you okay?

Hamlet: (*Softly*) Ja.

Ophelia: (*Softly*) Ja.

Beat.

Hamlet: It's us. It's us. It's...

Ophelia: (*Vocal*) Mmm. It.

Hamlet: That.

Ophelia: It. Ja.

Hamlet: Fine.

Ophelia: Fine.

Hamlet: I'd like you to stay.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

XI

Claudius: *(From a distance)* Why are you here?

Gertrude is not listening.

Gertrude: I'd like you to stay.

Hamlet is not listening.

Ophelia: I'm sorry.

Gertrude is not listening.

XII

*Gertrude goes to lie on the floor in front of Hamlet.
He cleans around her.*

Hamlet: So many things unclean,
So many things that dirty me for you
So many
So many
I can't catch my breath
I can't catch my breath without thinking about the filthy pollution
I can't pollute you, Ophelia
You're so pure
I can't pollute you
Ophelia?
Wait for me
It must come clean
Wait –
Ophelia, it must come clean
Wait –
Ophelia, wait –
Ophelia –
Keep yourself open for me
I want to live in a glass box with you
A glass box that sparkles
With no smears on the glass
Ophelia
Wait –
I'm smearing the glass,
Wait, Ophelia –
My breath-fog opaque
I'm smearing the glass
I draw your face in the fog
Droplets hang on the edge of the line and then
Run
Down
Parallel lines
Ophelia
Wait for me
Ophelia
Wait –
Ophelia
Wait for me.
Ophelia –

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Beat.

For once just look at me.

Ophelia writes chalky letters to Hamlet. She can't look at him.

Ophelia: Hamlet

... I've been waiting.

Hamlet?

...Why won't you hold me, Hamlet?

Let me hang...

Let me hang heavy from your hand

Hamlet,

I'm losing it

I can't find it any more

It, that, it, us,

it –

Hamlet.

Hamlet?

Hold me again

Press your thumb soft against the line of my collarbone

Hamlet,

Press your thumb soft against the rib of my ear

Slip your hand soft against the back of my neck

Slip your hand soft

Soft –

Hamlet?

I loan myself to you.

Hamlet.

I loan myself to you.

I loan myself to you

Without expiry.

Hamlet cannot hear her over the sound of his scrubbing.

Gertrude: Did you know that a hamlet is a small town?

Did you know that a hamlet is a small town?

Did you know that a hamlet is a small town?

Did you know that a hamlet is a small town?

Did you know that a hamlet is a small town?

Did you know that a hamlet is a small town?

It's not a small piece of ham.



Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

XIII

Claudius: What makes us different?
Trying to make it work
I'm tired of writing now.
Harden
Keep the frame intact
I want to take
To break,
To roll around in the filth of this – of this thing
I want to get through
I want to scrape through
You can see me, I know you can see me.

Gertrude is laughing.

Your neck, your wrists, your chest
Your footsteps.
Your neck, your wrists, your chest
Your chest
Your wrists
Your neck.

Gertrude: (*Laughing*) Hamlet?

Claudius grabs her arm.

Gertrude: You get to see someone's real side.

Claudius: Tell me, how can I get to see you?

Gertrude: (*Laughs*) I don't think you want to see me.

Claudius: Why not?

Gertrude: (*Vocal*) Mmm.

Claudius: I don't see the problem here.

Gertrude: Sometimes it's worth it. Sometimes it's not.
Hamlet?

Hamlet: (*Laughing*) I wanted this so badly.

Ophelia picks up Gertrude's knitting and slowly pulls out the thread, watching.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

XIV

Hamlet: Are you okay?

Ophelia: Are you okay?

Hamlet: *(Softly)* Ja.

Ophelia: It's us. It's...

Hamlet: That.

Ophelia: Fine.

Hamlet: That first moment...

Gertrude: *(Interrupting)* Hamlet?

Claudius: *(To Hamlet)* Why are you here?

Hamlet: *(To Ophelia)* I want you to stay.

Ophelia isn't listening.

Ophelia: *(To Gertrude)* I was right.

Gertrude: I know.

Ophelia: I'm... *(Begins to say)* sorry

Gertrude: *(Interrupting)* I know.

Claudius: *(To Hamlet)* Why are you here?

Ophelia: I want to see you,
but I don't want you to see me
I can't bear to see myself seen by you

Gertrude: Hamlet?

Hamlet is scrubbing, furiously.



Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

XV

All four characters speak over one another, tumbling, seething.

Hamlet: When my father passed away he left
me a ring
He left it to me
His father left it to him
I should have kept it safe
I should have kept him safe, but I didn't.
But memories fade so quickly
As people do
I should have kept him safe, but I
didn't. (*Repeated*)

Ophelia: I threw you into the sea. I held on so
tightly that I let you go. I held on so
tightly. We can look, but we can't
touch, or own, or hold, or belong,
anywhere. I held on, I kept holding,
long after you were skeleton or a frame
or nothing, or nothing, or nothing, or
nothing, long after you scraped
yourself away and nothing on my
fingertips and nothing left to throw and
nobody to see me, but still you here,
and still the throbbing, and still the
throbbing, and still distant, and still the
throbbing distance.

Gertrude: Do you remember as a child
when you would lie on the backseat of
the car, and listen to the sea go by, and
watch the stars stay still, and us
moving, and us driving, do you
remember Hamlet?
Sometimes I would take the long way
home Hamlet
Just to feel
Your leaden body, heavy with sleep,
In my arms
Against my breast
So heavy
Hanging
Hamlet?
Do you remember?

Claudius: ... Driven by a mainspring
which must be wound regularly.
Tight. Tightly wound.
The force is relayed through a series of gears
to power a weighted wheel
which oscillates back and forth.
which oscillates back and forth at a
constant rate.

Hamlet: I should have kept him safe, but I didn't.

His scrubbing intensifies.



Images:
Louise Bruwer

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

XVI

Ophelia is pulling out the thread. It seems to never end. She is unravelling balls of wool, piling them up next to her.

Ophelia: Rosemary, for Gertrude.

Basil for Gertrude

Lavender for you,

Lavender for only you.

I can smell the rose geranium in your hair, Hamlet

I can smell it still, from when we rolled in the grass,

Hamlet, those

Green stains on your shirt

And an itchiness left salty on my skin

And your mouth left salty on my skin

And your love tight and salty on my skin,

Like I was mummified in that moment,

There

under the dappled light

Of the tree your father planted.

Oh! –

I'm bleeding. Did you know, Hamlet?

I'm bleeding. Here, where you were.

Between her legs there is blood.

I didn't make another...

I couldn't, Hamlet.

I couldn't

make a little town.

Hamlet?

I couldn't...

It's running down here, Hamlet.

My white socks will be stained

They will be ruined,

Hamlet

Blood stains

Blood...

Blood dries brown, not red, Hamlet

Did you know?

It dries sticky and brown and clumps up, Hamlet.

It's not clean

She tries to clean the blood with the wool

I'm trying but

I'm bleeding bits of me, Hamlet

I'm scared

Hamlet!

I'm scared

I don't know how

Hamlet!

She is spitting on the wool and trying to clean between her legs; more and more of the wool is going into her mouth. She retches and coughs up, keeps retching, dry and raspy, keeps retching, dry heaves, keeps retching desperately. She is waving to him in the distance. In the distance, he is singing. Singing and scrubbing.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

I want to see you, don't want you to see me,
see myself seen by you. It's excruciating. It's everything.
I can smell the rain Hamlet. I can smell it.
It's seeping into my belly
It's making a home under my ribs
It's filling the vacuum of my womb
I can smell the rain
I can't feel it

She is floating in a puddle of water, watching the stars. She sings. A song that reminds her of her mother's heavy bosom.

I'm a rat, Hamlet.

Hamlet begins to sing a different tune, complementary to hers, filling the gaps like water between ice cubes, wearing down her tune over time. Singing and scrubbing.

Ophelia sees a familiar face.

You are endings and beginnings and nothing,
I departed in a dream with you.
Trying to hold onto something but losing everything, or nothing, or
everything. In the morning, the stain was a map of my childhood home. Raw,
red, after. The act of becoming.
Are you here?
Why are you here? M-

I'm a rat.
Even rats can see the stars
Even rats can feel the rain
I can feel it now
On my skin
Pinpricks of misty vapour
Pins and needles
Only wet
Only wet
I'm breathing in the water
Hamlet?
I'm breathing
I can swim underwater
I can see you here
Magnified
I can see you
I threw you into the sea
I'm sorry
I'm sorry
I'm sorry
I'm sorry
I can feel you
I can feel the water inside of me
I can feel the water flowing through me
I'm clean Hamlet
I'm clean for you.
I'm clean, I'm...

She is still.

Beat.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Hamlet stops scrubbing. He stops singing in the middle of a thought, in the middle of a breath.

There is silence.

In the distance, a violin scratches. In the distance, there is a knock at a door and it opens. There is a hug and a greeting. There is an entry and an exit. There is an exit and an entry.

Hamlet finds Ophelia's body. He lies behind her for a while. His sadness sings high into the rafters.

Gertrude watches from a distance.

XVII

Gertrude: You standing alone in the light
Your blood
keeps you warm in the cold
I crept out my room and
down the stairs.
I came to a clearing where I could see the stars dancing on a sheet of glass.
It was my
Mother... but
but I will not keep you.
Nothing. The calming sound of nothing. Still. Clarity.
My mother would always brush my hair, till every knot was unknitted. The brush
she used was given to her by her mother.
It was left to me. Her scent, the sweat from her palms, and her mother's, was
embedded
into the handle, the strands of my hair woven through the bristles.

Gertrude starts to laugh.

He threw it out the window
It sailed between rooftops and trees.
And then it was still.
And then there was...

Gertrude is laughing hysterically.

Hamlet: What is it you want? Say what you want from me!

Gertrude: I want you to fucking see me!

Nothing.

For once just look at me.

Nothing.

Hamlet is cleaning furiously.

Hamlet: The floor is filthy it won't come clean, it won't come clean
I scrub salty seed away
I scrub the salty seed of my mother's filth
It has stained me
I can find it in my cells it is dirty here and
I can't vacuum pack myself

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

I can't bear to touch you
I can't bear to look at you
I can't bear to touch you
I can't –

(He is blasting anger at Gertrude:) I CAN'T BEAR TO LOOK AT YOU
I CAN'T BEAR TO TOUCH YOU
THE FLOOR WON'T COME CLEAN, THE GROUND IS STAINED,
THE GROUND IS SOILED, THE SOIL IS FULL OF MY FAMILY BLOOD
AND SOIL CANNOT COME CLEAN IT ONLY TURNS TO MUD.

Beat.

I want to crawl inside of you. I want to make my home inside of you. I
want to be at home somewhere. I want to find a home somewhere,
there. It. This. Us.
I want to lie between your breasts I want to feel your heartbeat against my
skin, I want to, I want to, I want to live in a glass box with you, I want to love in a
glass box with you
Ophelia?
Ophelia.

Ophelia is still.

Beat.

Hamlet continues to clean.

Hamlet: sometimes I feel my body is covered in syrup, like a mummified
honey-covered human, leaving my trace on everything I touch, sticky
surfaces, sticky seats, the expression on your face haunts me, holds –
I saw your eyes see my eyes, I saw my sticky fingers feel the line of your lip. I saw
too much skin to forget, I touched too much skin to forget.
Ophelia.

Sometimes your foot would cramp,
Stuck in stasis
Twisted like a wet rag
And I would hold it in my lap and press against the arch
And you would hold your breath.

My thumb perfectly fits in the arch of your foot
Fits like my thumbprint was carved onto the sole
Onto your soul
Ophelia
You would sigh
Deeply
You would sigh soft sibilance
I wanted to breathe in that air,
I wanted to hold it in my lungs,
Get high off the vapours of you
Ophelia,
In the bath with you firm against my back, your breasts floating, your
hands soft on my chest,
Float me downstream, now,
Ophelia.

Andi Colombo

Like Hamlet

Carry me on the waters of your breast
Float me downstream
I am ready to float with you
Ophelia
I am ready.
I am ready to float away.

Hamlet watches Ophelia. He sings, his hands float in front of him helplessly.

Gertrude watches Hamlet.

Claudius watches Gertrude.

The mirrors watch them all.

Notes

1 From Pablo Neruda's "Tonight I Can Write (the Saddest Lines)": "This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance. / My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her."

2 From Sylvia Plath's "Morning Song": "Your mouth opens clean as a cat's."



Aphiwe Namba



Aphiwe Namba started writing and directing plays after completing a diploma in drama and production studies (Durban University of Technology). He produced the plays Us Against Them, Amongst Men, and Confessions, and made a cameo appearance on etv's Imbewu. He has received various awards, including Best Director at the Imbewu Theatre Festival, creative achievement award for musical direction in Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi, in which he also played the lead role, and for musical direction in Untombazi. Aphiwe played the lead role of Creon in Antigone at the Courtyard Theatre, served as the musical director at the National School of Art Children's Festival, among other festivals he has participated in, including the NAF Grahams Town Arts Festival. He teaches drama and music specialisation at Lamontville Youth in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Overview

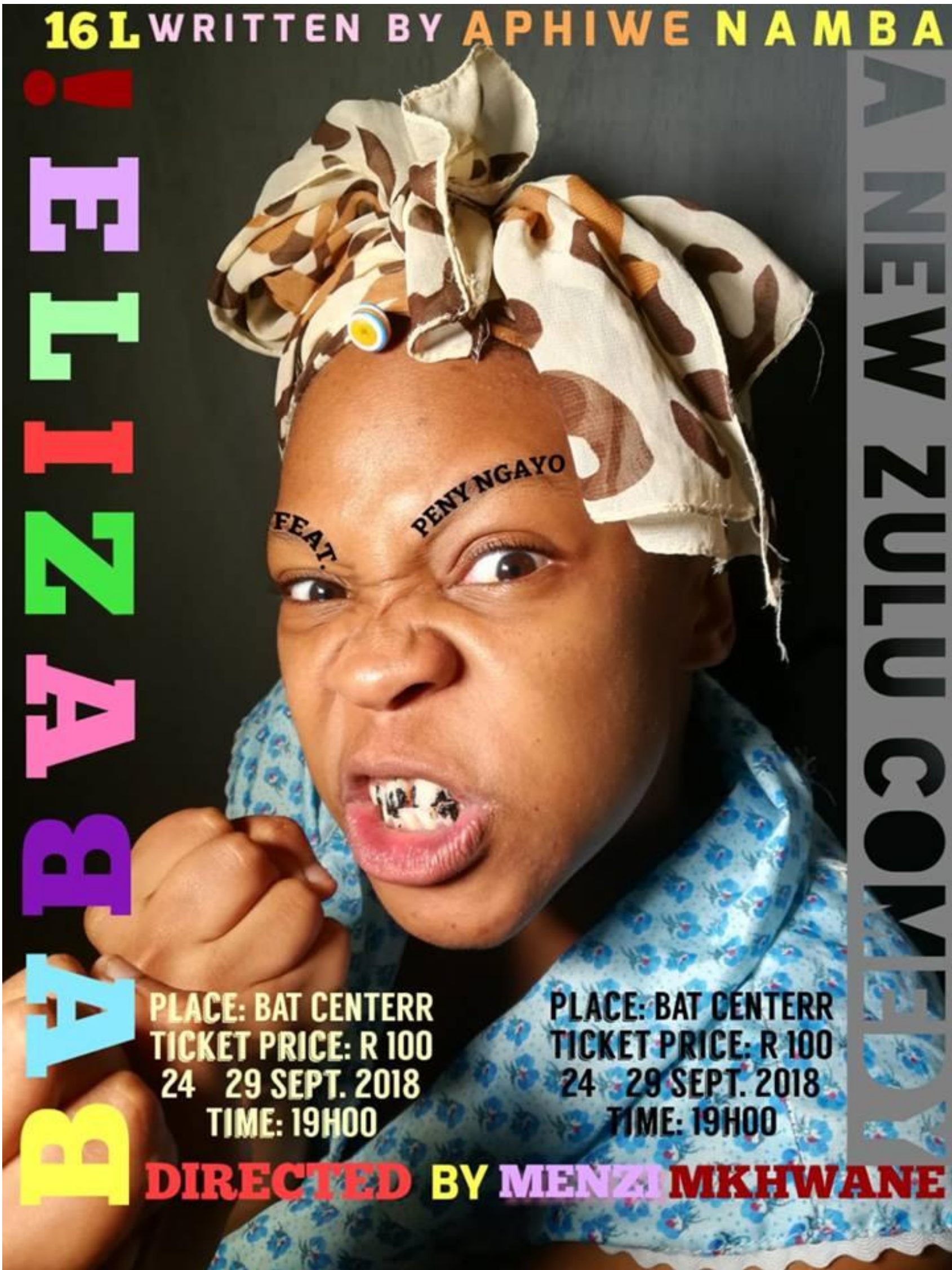
Babazile! is a theatrical one-hander performance comedy. It unravels the day-to-day shenanigans of a single mother working as a hawker. She cleverly communicates the struggles many of these unsung breadwinners undergo to maintain their households. *Babazile!* includes atrocious, uncensored and provocative scenarios around topics that many people from different walks of life can relate to. The play gives the audience a more personal, informative look into the life of a hawker in a humorous manner.

Performance history

Babazile! was performed on stage at the Bat Centre in Durban from 24 to 29 September 2018 with **Peny Ngayo** in the title role and directed by **Menzi Mkhwane**.

Characters

Babazile



Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Babazile enters the stage. Items for sale are on display on a table.

Babazile: Kusa, kusa. Nkosi impela okwabona yithi okwezandla ngyaktshela. Sesaphenduka abamnumzane bamakhaya ethu, phela lezi zinto zazi ukusimithisa zisishiye kanjalo. Athi sala usuyozibona wena nomthwalo wokuthi kuyolalwa k'dliweni. Yaz akushiye nje usaluzbuza ukuthi ngempela ngempela ngenziwani? Bekunani nje ukudlala eyakho indima njengomuntu wesilisa? weh klibi! kephi kona? la?

Morning has come. Lord knows what we as women have done to deserve this. We've now become the men in our households. Would it be too much to ask of you men to play your role as the man in the relationship?

Selingawa licoshwe inyoni ngyaktshela. Yebo ngiyashwabula vele, kakade kungfanele. Hhabe sesaba imfaduko nje thina athi mefika ulele ukubomnandi ubuthongo lobu akuvuse.

Sengfikile (*asho ngelizwi lesilisa*). Mmmnina Sipho ngilele. (*In a man's voice:*) Awukahle phela kunini nje ngikulangazelele? Manje? (*Man's voice:*) Kahle phela ngzothi nje kancane. Kephi kona? Khathele kabi nje mina safuna ukphumula. (*Man's voice:*) Yehlis izwi phela uzovus abantwana. Sengamane bavuke bengizwise nabo lomhlola oshiwo uyise wabo. (*Man's voice:*) Sekumhlola manje ukuthi ngifinyis ikhehla licinene? Licinaniswe yimi yini? Lize licinane nje ikehla belingambathi ngani? (*Man's voice:*) Ini? Yebo. (*Man's voice:*) Aibo! Nje. (*Man's voice:*) Umsangano ke manje longitshela wona. Ewu umuntu sekumele azifunele omakwapheni mekunje indaba ye-straight esigolozayo nje aargha, ngisaya esefweni.

Hamba. (*Laughs*) Uyalunga. Hawu, ewu savelelwa ukudunsiswa thiwa bheka le, iya le, mus ukuminca (*Laughs*) hawu! Oh yeka!

Now we are only seen as sex objects. In the middle of the night, while I'm resting peacefully, here he comes out of nowhere and demands sex. Who in the hell do you think you are? Can't you see that I'm sleeping? As the husband: 'Come on baby, I just want a quickie. I promise to be in and out.' Excuse me, I'm not in the mood! As the husband: 'Keep it down you'll wake the children. Rather I go get myself a side chick who will satisfy my sexual craving.' I don't give a damn. I refuse to be taken as some piece of meat, being told 'Lie on your back, lift up your bum,' and so forth. Go to hell and find yourself a side chick. Voetsek!

Aboya kubona labomakwapheni babo khathele phela ukugqilazeka ngoba phela naku sama straight. Uya-ayina la, uya cleaner, uyapheka wenza konke. Masukhangeza ucela imali yesinkwa usubikelw izaba. Zolo lokhu ubonakele emall nama pizza ko-Debonair nesinye nje isdwedwe esifak inzipho ne-Weave yakaCheeky. Kodw eyethu indaba ayingenwa, zilambile manje iingane zilokhu zingitefezela. Ma fun ukuthi! Ma senglambile! Ma cel iairtime! Ma kanti ubuya nini ubaba? Gowani man ungbona ngileng ubaba wakho mina?

So ke engizama ukusho ukuthi to hell ngalabantu besilisa. Ncono ngiziqomele wena tafula lami ngoba egcineni uzongfakela imali. Nje! (*goes with body expression*).

I mean, ladies, we cook, we clean, we do house chores, and still get fokol when you ask him for money. All you get are a bunch of excuses. Hence why I prefer to focus on my business, cause unlike men, you don't disappoint. It was heard through the grapevine that he was seen with a floozy wearing a cheap weave from Cheeky and you bought her Debonairs pizza at the mall. And now the kids always pestering me about airtime and stuff. Where's their daddy? Busy gallivanting with all these kinds of hoodrats. To hell with these bloody men!

Azibizi go nazo lezinto. Bahlakaniphile impela laba abazitshalelayo eyngadini zasemakubo. Engazukuthi nami ngizoba joyina manje. Sesadlal otsotsi besidayisela umbhedo wodwa obolile bolile. Usasabuthe kthiwe uzoncishw inkontileka ngob uwande ngomlomo.

Ngebhadi nangeshwa ke mina owam umlomo ngiyawusebenzisa bandla qiniso lihle nje bakithi wangikhuzela nje inyongo uzolithola nawe iboshi. Angikunanazi nje lokho ehhe ungizwe kahle. Kwaze kwalamula bona laba oNtombfuthi noQhamukile ngilibambe ngamawashingi ikula lakhona.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Ekubeni ngilichazele kahle kwasekuqaleni ukuthi alingangihafuleli amapula, amaolitshi nokunye okuncono alinciphise ngakubanana ngoba ubungasathengwa kakhulu. Ayi ke (*with gesture*) kwazifanela nje nokuthi amanz emhlane wedada.

Nesfanakalo esitshekile (*Indian accent*;) Sisi yizwa lo mina kahle neh I can't lonika wena discount nga half price ngoba yimanje mina ayitholile full price from wena lomali lo-rent neh. Futhi ke yabiza too, too, too, too much price lama fruits na veggie emarket neh. Manje if yonke bantu if bafika lamina like wena asking favor, favor my business file my business now neh. So sisi cela please hear me well nonke lokhokha rent money every month stock sami stock mina nika wena losebenza daily neh. Ayikhala ma complaints kimina Naidoo now just like you mina dinga business, money sisi money ayidlile children lami lokhaya if wena ayinika mali yami rent neh. Mina ayithandi xabana nawe neh. Lapho ngithi ayi ngiyamuyeka loNaidoo wakhona nenkani yakhe angihambe, lesilima sasamoosa savele sangipansa. (*Expressions*) Hawema, hawema, hawema, hawema!! What the fuck! (*ihaba*).

Angibange sabuz okuningi zaya phez kwakhe (*gestures*) ayadliwa lamaswidi kini lendiya? Kwala kangaka ukuthi ngimphambanise nemvula ngabuye ngazkhuza umsebenzi wami phela lo isinkwa sabantwana bami lesi esizoba encupheni. Ayi kwedlula ke lokho kodwa akubange kusaba mnandi emva kwalokho ngisho nje ayisabhekani ngeziqu zamehlo useyathumela umyalezo bheka wena iposi neposi, nkos impela.

The price of this produce is damn expensive at the market where I buy them. Lucky are those who grow it for themselves. That way, they make helluva savings. Not to mention that idiotic salesman called Naidoo who always gives me a hard time because I'm told to half the prices for the banana and apples, but he never listens, and if it weren't for Qhamukile and Ntombifuthi, I would have dealt with him to meet his ancestors for an early appointment. I knocked him up and down all over the place. How dare you spank me like some cheap hooker? Since that day we no longer see eye-to-eye.

Aph amanzi ngiyakaze lezinto (*goes through her things*) saze sawaswela nawo lamanzi sibhokile nesomiso. Akaphumel obala bo nalomuntu owanikwa itender lemvula mengabe ungqongqoshe thizeni akenze ahlawule mekumele ehlawulile safa bo.

Konakele phela manje asisazi sithatheni sihlanganise nani nansi lengwadla yokushoda kwemvula imisebenzi yethu phela lesishayekayo uyayibo leyonto. Ukshoda kwemvula kush ukunyuka kwemali yokuthenga emarket akusekho ke okunye esigakwenza ngaphandle kokuthi nathi sinyuse imali esidayisa ngayo senosixolela belungu bami isimo siyaphoqa.

Baphi nabefundisi? Befundisi nani anezeni bo nilamule kuhlelwe ukhukhulelangoqo wesiguqo kukhulekelwel imvula kodwa ngiyanesukela nimatasa kabi nani nihambana noCR yini le CL. Ayi lokho nje, nani kodwa akeniyeke lemkhuba yenu yokufuna ukufana nezwe yini bo? Akenenze imisebenzi yenu yokuba abelusi bethu thina zimvu zenkosi nihlukane nokwenza nokuphambane nemiyalo kaJehovah. Awu ikuhulumeni amaGupta nasemasontweni sekunama Gupta awu oh yeka!

Let me get ready before the customers start arriving. Where's this water so I can sprinkle these fruits a bit? Guys have you noticed this drought and shortage of water crisis? It's killing us guys, I mean, in our line of work. We suffering like nobody's business. Because if there's a shortage of rain, we have no choice but to increase the selling price, for labour is damn expensive.

Call on the ministers of Water Affairs or something really there needs to be some intervention. Or maybe call on your pastor Mboros and Bushiris so they organise some prayer for the rain. Who am I kidding? Your pastors are too busy with corruption and chowing people's wives or attending those investigative inquiries. Corruption galore, even in the house of the Lord, no shame! Bringing Gupta businesses even where they don't belong.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Ngaze ngakhuluma kwangfanela ungaze uzitshele ukuthi ngumam mkhokheli hlampe kanti lutho ngilenhlobo egcina mekwiphasika ukubeka umcondo wam endlini yesonto. Ngi busy kakhulu yabo manje akhekho nongisizayo kulelibhiznisana lam ngizibambe so mekwisonto kuba usuku lwam lokuphumula. Isabatha, angithi noJehovah waphumula ngosuku lwesikhombisa? Ehhe pho manje ungsolalani?

Nanokuthi ke awu akuzigemegeme emasontweni anamhlanje uyayaz iGenerations ayi ke leyamanje ngisho le endala eyayinoNgamla (*qhafaz ulwimi*) noSenzo noJason (*ancimfe*). Kambe bengthini konje? Oh ja kuyaphingwa, kuyaqolwa, hey konke ukonakala kwezwe ngath sekuvele kwaputshukelela esontweni, imihlola. Mina ke nje personally ngaba nokuhilizisana nje okuncane noMam mfundisi awu guess kwakubangwani?

Isipheko saka mamMagwaza ekwakumele siqoqwe imina ebese ngibuye ne-slip ke mina njengesiqiniseko sokuthi cha kuthengiwe njengesivumelwano. Uyazazi ke nawe izinto zasemhlabeni nami ngazithola ngisilahla le slip ngoba ngadlula nje kwezinye nje indawo thizeni yabo leyonto?

So nangu ke lomfazi esengibukanisa nabantu sisathi nje sisangena emasangweni akoMagwaza siphuma emathuneni. Sisame icue yokugez izandla esangweni wabesengisho: (*mamfundisi*) 'Kodwa ngempela ngempela weBabazile kwakhala nyonini lakuwena? Ngikucele kahle ukuthi usize ungibuyele ne slip wena wakheth ukwenza intando yakho awubheke nje manje uthi omama besphiko bengibuke kanjani ke manje? Sebezongikhomba bethi ngumfazi okhohlakele sengidl imali yesipheko.'

Hhay ngivele ngizehlisel umoya ngithi lalela ke wemamfundisi ndini. Akukhulunywa nam kanjalo siyezwana usuwenz engathi wena awuwenzi amaphutha ngcela ungixhege wesketi ngob engathi uzongixaka.

Futhi ungabasola yini abantu ngoba vele nidl imali zabantu wena nalomfundisi wakho womenyi selokhu kwathi nhlo kancane kancane eyimemezelweni, bazalwane sibusisiwe isandla esiphayo ngokunjalo ke sicela ninikele imnikelo wokwakha indlu yesonto. Kodwa dololo akho ndlyesonto eyakhiwa la ngisho ngoba kusaphila ongizalayo umama kusasontelwa ekilasini lesikole namanje. Cha ngiyanibonga.

Kwasekubukwa thina tshele wena kwaMagwaza loyo ozokhaliswa nangu esebelethe izandl eqolo wabesefakazela uchommie wakhe ethi usazocela ushintshi emalini yespheko. Yehheni webantu ngivelelwa yini ilanga libalele? Go one uzowuthola egqe lowoshintshi noma kuJesu angithi nithi uyindoda yabafelokazi? Ngasho ngizishayela ishwaphana sam ngibheke ekhaya (*esho eziqhenya*).

I for one haven't been to church in a long time. I'm the type that visits church on Easter holidays. Not because I am a heathen, but it's because I'm a busy woman. I just don't have the time.

There was a time when I was in church at a funeral. Along with some ladies we came to support a grieving man, Madlala. And as we were about to enter the gates, here comes the pastor's wife accusing me of overspending the money collected to assist with the food items to be used after the funeral. I told her off straight away, 'They don't call me straight talk for nothing.'

All eyes were on us I tell you now. Told her where to get off her and her money-mongering husband scamming people's hard-earned monies, for what? Since at the time my very mother was still alive, people fellowshipped in classrooms.

Even today still, what happened to the building fund? Shrewd bunch of losers is what yol are I say. For the why and for the who. Coming here acting holier-than-thou, as if you the perfect human being who don't make mistakes, rhaaaaaa!

(*Ebezamula*) Kuyash ukuthi umuntu uvuke ngovivi namhlanje. Kuyavukwa phela la ehhe kubamb ezingelayo. Kungekudala azob eseqhamuka namakhasimende ami angiqedelele loku ebengikwenza. Ihhe konje kona lesfebe esikwelete iairtime la izolo sathi sizongikhokela namuhla vese futhi sivamise ukudlula ngala mesiqonde eteshweni.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Damedi cishe sangishodisela man les. (*To audience:*) Hawu yini? Nathuka nje mengimbiza ngaleligama kakade vele wisona isifebe. Awuzwe ke ngikutshele indaba ungayibuzanga phela ezishwashwadayo zithi losisi ke mhlampe kuzozwakala kancono mengihloniphisa. So bekuno brother owumakhelwane kalosisi ubrother lo yena engumahlalela. Ubrother washiyelwa umuzi abakubo emva kokushona kwabazali balo brother so nje uright yabo imali zamafa nje standard. Inkinga nje yakhe ukuthi umahlalela, zibamosha lapho ke abantu imali zamafa but anyway asikho ke lapho. Usisters yena uyazihlanganisela nje intengatheni enjalo nje uyazithand izinto (*emphasis*) ezikude naye. Phezu kwalokho unengane nobab wengane nje naye nje ozihlanganiselayo namatoho nje angatheni.

Iproblem la ikuthi uhlezi engekho around ubab wengane ikhakhulukazi ngama weekend. Ubrothers wamafa ngapha zihlezi nje zibuya wayawaya weekend phakathi neviki kuyazifanela kudliwa la mafa phela. And so usisters ezithand enjalo izinto akasiyo le types evele nje yabo nje nawe izilahle nje yabo (*qhafaz ulwimi*) sazama ukuba ne classinyana nje shame yabo.

And so uye lo mekukhona okudinga ukulungiswa layikhaya uye ocingweni, makhi, makhi! Awuze ngapha bo, kunjani makhi (*eshalazela*) ay syaphila. Nakungihlushwa umabonakude wam laph endlini ngisabathe ngicofoza iremote luth ukhanya ngiyestolo ngotheng ama battery ngiyabuya ngiyacofoza luth ukhanya. Sengbone kuncono ngize kuwe mhlambe idinga utouch womuntu wesilisa.

(*As neighbour: ubala lolo*) ebesh ufeleba. Nangeliny ilanga makhi, makhi: naku sengiqunyelwe amapayipi amanzi, naku sekuvuz phandle makhi, makhi! Heh bantu babazani, lapho lesaramu sobab wengane kumnyama ebusweni benkawu ubusy la ngaphandle bayamukhenika umfazi wakho la ewu amanyala! oh yeka!

Ngike ngasho njalo ukuthi ncono kona ngizihlalele ngiyizwide nje okwabani nje ukmelana ne stress sokufebelwa.

Yooo ayi, yawning goes to show that one woke up at the break of dawn. Yesterday, some bitch borrowed airtime and promised to pay back, and I nearly forgot not to worry she normally uses this route when she passes. I'll catch her out, that bitch. Hey, don't look at me like that. She's a bitch and she knows it as well. All them know this, like there's this lady if you prefer it that way then.

Who was my neighbour who always had the heart for this young brother who's also a neighbour. This young brother came into a whole lot of cash of trust funds. You know how these youngsters are with money, they just reckless and don't care whether coming or going.

Our young lady, on the other end, forever looking for attention with nonsensical pleas for help around the house, just to get attention. Meanwhile, the lady has a man, poor fella, he's always not around and here they busy busting nuts and tightening screws up your girl. No shame, I tell you, no shame. Wonder why they call them the B-word.

Aibo! siselapho ubani owanitshel ukuthi inkundla zethu zokuxhumana owatsapp no-Facebook abenu ukuthi nizolengisa indaba zenu masenixakekile?

Wena ubuvele uxakwe yini kwasekuqaleni ufaka oIn a relationship sekuyaba single. Ngelinye ilanga going to the movies with hubby uze ufake nalabopopayi bakhona sekuyaba futhi men are such dogs uze ugcizelele izinja imigodoyi.

Mameshane kanti labo Facebook seabhenduka osonhlalakahle na yii? Ingakho nje ngawuvala owami ngatshela nalezingane engizele ngathi nje meke ngabona oyedwa edlala ufacebook uzoyikhoth imbenge yomile.

Yabo nje manje kushaya umoya sizidlalela uwatsapp ngisho phela sonke nala emkhakheni yethu yama tafula sesize sine group chat akulalwa ngyaktshela wena kancane kancane qingqingqingqing yakhala into yomlungu ziyash indaba uze ushodisel abantu ngoshintshi ulokucofozile nje (*laughs*) ey ngoba.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Guys, if I may ask, who told you that our social networks platforms must be used as your social workers' platforms airing all your dirty, funny, silly relationship issues? One minute in a relationship, the next minute men are trash. I see this all the time, that's why I left Facebook and joined WhatsApp. Even here among us hawkers, we've even formed our group chat. You end up short-changing customers busy with group chat gossip all day every day.

Baphi kanti labantu bheka nje sebeqalile ukudayisa noQhamukile lutho mina. Mhlambe kuncono kona ukuhlala ngafiki muntu okwabani nje ukufika komuntu ozomane afune ukukweleta kusa nje?

Ngyaktshela uzuxakeke nje ukuthi nhloboni yomuntu le ezokuzela nge story uyakwazi uklandwa ngohlelo ekuseni (*as umthengi*;) manje maAuntiza kona umuntu othembise ukuthi uzongnika imali ntambama ungbona nje anginayo nam eyokugoduka ngithembeke kuyona lemali engsazoyithola ngyakcela bandla ungikweletise intencane nje iapula no-banana ngith ukbamb umoya yabo. Ebesh ekugoqa asikho sonke le-story akushaya ngaso uyaz ushaya eshaya umashaya omdala ngath ungaz umtshela ukuthi wemfanwam lukhulu esangahamba ngalubona kulomhlaba lento ongzela nayo isipusha nje, umsangano. Ubuye umdabukele ke bandla umntanomuntu umnike yamnika nje kodwa uyaz ukuthi usuyamupha nje akukho mali la ezofika ntambama nx!

Akenginitshela indaba ningayibuzanga nina enithanda ukweleta ebese ningakhokhi angithi nginitshelile goNaidoo nekhanda elingath ligcwele usimende. Lemali oyithatha ungayibuyisi izobe isihlawuliswa mina ebese mina ngisale nani? Zidleni ingane zami ngoba yimi obaba nako konke kuloyamuzi?

Ukuthi ngihlalel emjondolo akush ukuthi angiyikhokhi irent phela lowamjondolo usegcekeni lomuntu uyayibo leyonto? Umastende ke yena isalukazi esingafakwa kulo libuya nawe angilutho mina uma usungiqhatanisa nalo, yabo?

Siyedelela lesasalukazi kwala ngisho usuthi uzosicashela uma kuphel inyanga irent ingekho ngathi siyazi ukuthi uyabaleka sokubamba usath uyanyonyoba ebumnyameni.

(*As isalukazi*;) weBabazile ngiyakbona njalo bastedi iphi imali yami lonondindwa lo? Incane njalo intexabanis abantu singaxoxa sihlebe ngabantu kukhuhle kunjeyaya akubenjalo ke mase sengifun imali yami kungani manje usufun ukuthi ngikulandele ngoba wena sqhaza ndini, ngqesta-ndini kati laseWema usubon ukuthi usuzongi crosser mase ngifun imali yami. Ungafuni ngikwenze isilo sengubo njengalenkawu engayixosha eyayakh eduze kwakho usakhumbula angithi? Ngisize ke dali ayikhal esandleni ngaphamb kokuthi kujik eplate'ni ukudla.

Lenkawu akhuluma ngayo lomagogo elinye nje ibhungu esasizwana kabi nalo. uMbongeni igama lakhe.

Mbongeni lo wayengeve ezilungele engaphuzi engabhemi uswahla lensizwa le. Ezikhonze kabi nezingane zami evamise ukuziphathela onice-nice mephuma emsebenzini wakhe. Ubesebenza kwaKopoletsheni eshayel amabhasi kuko konke lokulunga kwakhe uMbongeni ubenenkinga eyodwa vho ukuba umkhaya loku bekungavumi ukuphuma kuye. Ewu ihluphile lensizwa noma sengim-checkisa phela ukuthi eyi wena thayima phela qaqeka awusekho emakhaya la kuseThekwini la laph uvik amagundane asashintsh irattex ayenz iwoonga ebsuku, phaphama mjita.

Weh, lutho ukungizwa uMbongeni enjalo nje ewudla umuthi ay shame ubewudla goh. Angani ikona loku okwamuxoshisa la emqashweni yaz wayenganqeni nje uMbongeni kungonakele lutho nangu emva kwendlu uyageza endishini, ngesudi yeselele mntakama (*emphasis*) nje!

Lapho ke yebo kumnyama kodwa ngisho nalegenge esayaluza estradini ebhema intsango nayo isakangako yabo so ke kobabaz omakhelwane kukhuzwa lomhlola abawubonayo. Lapho ke lento yayingaqali ukwenzeka cha sekuneskhathi eyiyenza ubafo. Okuhlekisayo ke ukuthi bakhona omakhelwane ababengam mind uMbongeni kwazise phela, ehmm (*clears throat*) uphiwe umntanomuntu. Bekungasabukeki kodwa uma nezingane sezizobuza ukuthi kanti ubhut uMbongeni megeza ugeza nenyoka yini? (*Laughs*).

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Wayizwa ke indaba umastende hha! kwangathi uyahlanya eyi ngangiqala ukumbona ebaseleke ngaleyandlela. Phela umagogo ile types engafuni ukhulunywa kabi emphakathini yize yona ihlez igade owrong babanye kanti ke ngalelo langa zingaye naku-mphakathi usumnuka ngobtakathi. Bethi njengoba ezazisa kangaka nje uthul uthini ngendod emnyama ne-hosepipe emva kwendlu ebusuku? Waxoshwa kanjalo uMbongeni emva kwakhe akasaqashisanga muntu ethi kusamele ugezwe loyamuzi ngesiwasho noma iqhud elimnyama ewu ngoba imihlola yasemqashweni oh yeka!

Just look at the time, even Qhamukile has begun working. Let me not complain rather. I don't get anyone than to have some crookster who'll want to take now, pay later. Early in the morning, coming up with stories and stories. 'Ah, auntie see, what happened is, I got no bus fare. Now I'm waiting for this guy who's gonna ask this other guy for money then that guy will talk to my guy on my behalf. After my guy gives me it, I'll pay you back first thing tomorrow,' – knowing very well this story is a bunch of bullcrap.

My dear, I'm the boss of all bosses when it comes to lies. I have rent to pay. And my landlady doesn't take bullshit. Now I must be ducking and diving trying to avoid her when rent is due. You'll hear her say: 'Yey Babazile, you snake, come here. I see you think you can hide from me, you bliksem.' Ask Mbongeni. Mbongeni was a former tenant who used to work at the bus corporation, and who loved to play with my kids, even brought home treats, who got chased away for bathing at night stark naked.

Even one of my kids asked me, 'Mommy why does Uncle Mbongeni bath with a hosepipe at night?' Why you may ask? It's because Mbongeni was one of those staunch traditional Zulu men who loved using muthi.

The landlady didn't have any of that after all when it came to minding other people's business, but now all eyes were on her business, and that pissed her off completely, and so out the door Mbongeni went. So I don't wanna take chances with that magogo.

(Aqhafaz ulwimi while licking her lips) Ihim nangu lo-boy nali leli Ben10. Hlezi ngimbuka sometimes ngize ngimqolozele medlula la yaz uyile types engichazayo yikona nje ukuthi elam iwashi dala lashaya.

Mara uyaz bathini age aint nothin but a number *(Qhafaz ulwimi)* so kwazi bani mhlambe nje umuntu usengaz senga eymithiyo angaz tsheli kodwa ukuthi kona imali azoyithola lakimina. Anginaso nje lesoskhathi sokondlana nebhobhodlwane la mina ngizele so nje usengafogofa mekuthi kuzodliw umuntu ebese kudliw imali.

Emva kokuthi ngihlukene nobab weyngane ngazithola senginesizungu ngiphenda phenduka ebusuku kungalaleki. Yangicacela bha le yokuthi yabo le ukuswel umuntu wesilisa inkinga yalana ukuthi ngangingeke nje ngizilahlele lamakhehla awontanga bami, ilenhlobo esakwazi ukgijima u90min enkundleni njengoTeko Modise engidingayo mina. Angifuni kodwa edli nyaope cha, cha, cha, cha uyaph lapho aibo!

Ngakhumbula ukuthi konje kona lo-boy wakwaBiyela yize ngingeke ngamfanisa nomalum wakhe engake ngajola naye ngama70s but at least shame ukahle uboy nginokumbona nokuthi ukhonzile nokuzivocavoca ebesegqoka lezikhiba zabo yabo lezi ezibambana zithi thanqa la eyngalweni ehhe lezo ke.

Ay ngelinye nje ilanga ngavele ngazidela kwangivuka ubufebe nami ngambiza, ay weza naye angaz noma wayezitshel ukuthi ngifun ukumthuma yini wathi engena nje ngomyango ngambamba wavaleka kunoxhaku. Akekho nje umuntu wesilisa odaliwe onga resistor le body le hha phela la nokuganiwe kuyikhipha yonk imali ize ngesoso ungadidwa ilamaphinifa esiwagqokile kube ngyakwaz nje manje bengzothi phenye amadilozi kona uzobona ukuthi akusiyo insambatheka lengikutshela yona ay kodwa asiyeke leyo.

Engasaqaqazeli amadolo umfana kaBiyela ngimuthe manqa, ngath fuhlu eshubeni, ngathi gaka,laba selehlile ibulukwe ngemilenze. Mina ke ngi professional angisheshi ukhumula amadilozi ngike kaboni ukuthi sisebenza ngeshamtas ekangakanani la angeke nga-waste umzimba wam for sweet nothing.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Ngagibela kuqala embhedeni ngase ngenza kanje (*does expression*) yehhheeni webantu ngivelelwa yini ngbuka? Into yakhona incaaane ingaka (*alingise*) ngavele ngathi akagqoke ay shame ngamgqokisa uBiyela ngath akalibone aze ngalo dankie shame ayi dankie.

Baqinisile abathi igora ezivocavocayo ghi (*expresses*) izingalo namamasela kodwa twing (*expresses*) isausage lakhona.

Okush ukuthi oBen-10 abakhokelwayo cha bayawenz umsebenzi bayile futhi evhenda angeke baze bakukhitaze hawema sengyabona nje ubsuku bonke ngikitazwa eshay okuseqhude (*demonstrates*) kwelabani ikuku lona leh hhayi la ngwanesu, nje! Bengaba yini nje kuvese kwenzeke iphutha or ibhadi lokuphinga angimithise ngaletotoloji lakhe whhoooo ai ngwabonga mina.

Sengihamb amaclicinic nasi nesisu mengabe kufuz uyihlo shokuthi sikhosha phansi lesisu isgora esincane. Wwhhoo shem nakuya sengiyabitoza emabhentshini ngidlala onesi ababhampayo bama uniform amhlophe nobu navy bengtshel ipass ne-special.

(*As nurses:*) Wena wawuth uwenzani? Shosho akuhlale nje lapho uzwe ubumnandi angith kwakumnandi umis amadolo uhhayizel into yokuthi ubukwe ubani?

Kwakwiphutha ngangingaqondile nam.

(*As nurses:*) Kwakwiphutha? Wena wawuth mukhumula iphenti umfana akwele ngaphezulu kuzokwenzakalani? Usuyayibona ke imphumela yenqantiza? Naziya ke usiyeke thina nokusikhalela usibangel umsindo la, siyasebenza la, yabo angith abanye ontanga bakho ekumele siba attendile- masha la epassage awukasikwa wena ungazodlala siyamazi thina umuntu osikwayo.

Ngoba nathi mantombazane asbolalela mebesiyala abazali bayayazi lento abakutshela yona ikona loku nami engihlezi ngitshela uAsa wami ngithi yabo nje masusuhlosil amabele usuqal ukanukela abafana ungisize nje uthath imtwalo yakho wohlala koninaluma bakho lemakhaya oPhongolo ngoba anginaso nje iskhathi sokujahana ngnabukisana no-dado babazukulu la emqashweni please ungisize please ungangingili.

Ayabiza ama-Pampers iyacika kabi futhi indaba yawo ukuthi ebiza kangaka nje usuhamb uwanyathela yonk indawo le. Asedal imfucuza nako konke ukuncola lobu. Uze ubone nje ukuthi kudlaliwe ngathi la eSantaflika sikhokhiswa ama pampers kangaka uthi hulumeni sithathaph imali ingane zethu zizala kangaka noma vele uyazi lemali yeqolo oyikhiphayo isazobuya ngama Pampers?

Nangonyaka ozayo uzobona wongbuz ungphal ulwimi isazonyuka eyeqolo ngokunjalo asazokwanda namavezandlebe, ngob iingane zethu (*expression*) woh yeka!

Here comes this hot stud. I always check him out when passing by. Reminds me of that Biyela boy that I once took my chances with. I'm lonely, hawu, sometimes those long winter nights have me craving a Ben10.

And so, one day I approached him like the gangster that I am. Don't know whether he thought I wanted to run him on some errands. I grabbed those tight muscles of his, pulled him closer against my breasts, so he can get warm.

And as I pulled down his pants, down with the zipper – Yooo!! What's this? His weenie was tiny, man. Guess it's true what they say about those muscle guys. All muscle over here and here, but down there zilch, I tell you, talking from first-hand experience.

Don't even want to think about what those silly nurses by the clinic, who would have a lot to say about my huge tummy that runs down by the legs. Another little muscle baby, hey, like father like son. I wouldn't survive shame sorry. Not for me, and so I told that Biyela boy to go home, change of plans.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Pampers are way too expensive, and our kids don't care, they'll still go about popping out kids all over the show. Government seems not to do enough. Condoms in schools won't help at all if you ask me. Because why? It's your stupid grants. Queues and queues every first of the month. Some of that money not even being used for the babies, but for their own personal needs. On one hand, a packet from Cambridge inside there's Fourth Street. On the other, a KFC brown bag underneath a packet from Legit. On her back, the baby is falling off, the towel is loose. Baby crying with a green, green fly sitting on a dry chicken drumstick. End of days type of stuff, I tell you now.

I even told my young Asa that when you've grown breasts and suddenly feel the urge for some dick, do me one favour, pack your things and go. I'm way too old to be babysitting asswipes who leave dirty, used Pampers all over the place. I just can't.

Ngiyasola futhi ukuthi akusadli ingane ngalemali yeqolo sekukhona nokugombela kwesakhe kunina, kanti? Kunokuthi behle labolayini beqolo bayanda goh. Kuvele kungasahambeki nasendleleni sekuyisminyamina bayangenelana nala kolayini kuqhum impama kona lapho hha kungaf umuntu ziyifuna la imali zazo iingane.

Animeni, ake sihlaziyisise kahle le yeqolo kwagama lakhona imali yeqolo okush ukuthi iyumthwalo ombeqolo uma siyingathekisa. Isizathu sokuthi ngithi lemali ayisafiki ezinganeni ngishiswa indlela okuba iyona eseyitholile unina imali wombona ngoshekasi waseCambridge owodwa vho onama fourth streets.

Kona lapho futhi ucarrier bag waseKentucky kwesokudla kugodlwe impahla zaseMr price. Wena umdal umngaka wake wazibona impahla zabantwana abancane kwaMr price? Ayi uAckermans kodwa Mr Price. Kwamtwana loyo nang emhlane usekhonkoshele bandla liyawa naletawula abetetiswe ngalo nanka namafinyela nansi nempukane ehlaza ethambweni le drumstick ayisekho nenyama kulelithambo sekuloku kuncelile yize kunjalo bandla okusanyana. Lafa (*emphasis*) elihle kakhulu.

Eish lamazwi aves angkhumbuza lemakhaya asoPhongolo laph engakhulela kona. Ayeshiwo ukhulu wami umamDlamini engeve khaliphile lowamfazi ngiyaktshela. Noma engasaboni kahle emehlweni kodwa wayenokusibiza sonke njengabazukulu bakhe asihlalise phansi siyazi ke lapho ukuthi usezosiyala. Siyomulingisela sihlekise ngaye kanje.

(*As ukhulu Mbhekeni:*) weMbhekeni angakhulumi ngedwa njengohlanya ngithe babize bonke nize la inkomo sezibuyile nje nazifaka esbayeni? Baphi bona oBawinile akuyobe zitheziwe inkuni njalo nina bofebelina ngizwile indaba zenu njalo ukuthi usuku lonke niluchitha nilandelana nalabafana bakaMsweli mebeyozingela nilapho, mebelusa nilapho futhi lalelani la asizele intombi ezizothand amadoda la siyezwana?

Wozani la phambi kwami kona ngizoniqondisa, uma umuntu wesifazane utwele. Igugu leli olithwele phakathi kwemilenze lifanele ukugadwa liqoqeke ngokuba igugu likayise okuzalayo akulona nje elokuhamb ulithi halamuzi kunoma imuphi umfanyana ongasokiwe niyezwa? Nani bafana bami fundani ukuba nemphatho yomuntu wesifazane njengentsika yena uzakuba umgogodla wakho ukuze ngelinye ilanga ube indoda eqotho emphakathini.

Uma ningenzi okulungile iyowakhiw obani imizi? Ngizodlula mina kuleligabadi ngelinye ilanga ngako ke ngiyanichushisa kuze nithi nani senibadala niphile indlela ekwiyo hay lamasimba yemikhuba esisanganise abantu beze basuk ebuntwini kwasala isigcwagcwa esizokhubaza isizukulwane esizayo. Babazile, sesilungile isiqhatha sami? Awuze naso ngafa ukoma - maseqedile ukusishay isqatha sakhe abesethi 'ey nina zingane wozani zogunda-esho ezosigunda ngebhodlela. umaDlamini wami ke loyo isikhokho somfazi esangishaya sangifaka kulayini ingakho nje ngike ngibuke lomhlaba osaphathwa ingane zamalungelo ngisho ukuthi konakele nje ingob imvubu ayisaziwa.

Ezami ingane ngiyazishaya nje meke zabheda hamba ke wongiceba emaphoyiseni uzosithola futhi isibhaxu ngabuya epolice steshi. Akukho hulumeni namthetho wawo ozongitshel ukuthi ezami ingane engaziteta ngedwa ngezinyembezi zami ematernity ward ukuthi ngizikhulise kanjani fullstop. Kwami yimi uhulumeni, nongqoshishilizi ongakuthandi lokho fokof kwami uhambe ke uyozimela wozibon ukuthi uphelelaphi. Ngiyanitshela bheka nje ukuthi ingane zenu mezingashaywa ziphendukani amaphara, eze-nyaope, iziwengu zobuyaluyalu zeziyoyoyo (*emphasis*) Sies! Anamahloni.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

I was raised by my granny in the rurals, and so I know how a woman should carry herself. My granny maDlamini was the best. She'd call us altogether as her grandchildren. If it weren't the likes of Mbhekeni and my other cousins for not doing their chores on time, she'll pick me and my sister Bawinile. In our case she would say, 'You girls better not be chasing after Msweli's boys. I heard that wherever they go, you girls are found there as well. Last time I checked in this house, we did not raise lustful girls who like going after boys like a dog on a bone.' We all knew after her ranting, she'll call us altogether to shave our heads with a beer bottle of all things. But she gave that tough love which is rare nowadays. No wonder there are so many spoilt brats running around.

Unlike your kids who just do anyhow, as if they got no proper upbringing. Me, I beat my kids, and I don't give a rat's ass about reporting me to the police. After I get bail, I'll come back to give you another beating. You spoil these brats too much, no wonder there's so many nyapoes and juvenile delinquents roaming around. It's yolz fault. Thanks to my maDlamini and mother, my Asa and them will never be sommer yellow on the outside and rotten to the core inwards.

Awungtshele nje umzali onjani osamukela imvalamlomo ephuma kuthisha obenukubeza eyakho ingane le oyizele. Wonakele mzala oyivumayo lento engasile kanje. Kufana nalabazali baseNquthu emva kokuphuma kwezindaba zalothisha olale nomfundi kona naku futhi sesiyezwa emisakazweni imihlola esigilwa abazali ababonakalis izwe kangaka. Mababoshwe maan belokhu bethi ukhlupheka, ukhlupheka sihluphekile. Fusegi (*emphasis*) kwayimina ngixakekile kodw awungboni ngidayisa ngoAsa wam manje wena kungani ungenzi okusuphile kunokwamukela ubribe, ibribe ngomtwana wakho pho? Hhha angabe ngbhemile umthunzi weynkunku nkos impela.

Still on that subject, tell me what kind of a parent will accept a bribe from a perpetrator who just raped your child? Then blame it on poverty. If you don't know what I'm talking about, I'm talking about that one incident that was all over newspapers and radio about that teacher from Northern KZN who raped his student, and when caught out, bribed the mother of the child not to prosecute him. Seemingly the mother agreed over a pack of groceries. What the hell? I would never on God's green earth sell out my Asa like that. I would be high on weed.

Ngike ngazidl ilayi nami zingemnandi goh ngithi sengizshayile ngihlale nginabe ngizinyawe kancane kamnandi ngize ngizumeke. Ngicabangane nama ex ami kodwa nani ma-ex ninonya. Hawu aya-sabotage amanye njengale eyaya emshadweni we-ex yayo.

Ifike ngokuzofaka umakoti imake up imenze nekhandla yamugila umakoti nge make-up yamubixa, yambixa mezithi ziyakhuz eziny impelesi ithi le-ex inhlobo entsha le ye-make-up ebetshel obani bona vele ilegenge yasemakhaya ayithwasile. Atshel umakoti ukuthi angasibuki isibuko ngoba ibhadi fanele ezezibuke eseshadile.

(*Laughs*) Nawe mkhwenyana awumcinyane uzohamb uyothungis isudi yakho kanokusho kwa ex yentombi yakho ozoshada nayo uzibone ushada ugqoke ijumpsuit ngyaktshela. Ingakho nje awami ama-ex ngenza sure sihlukana sizwana kungaxatshwene ngaphandle ke kodwa walobab weyngane lapho ke ayi cha kwahlukana inhloko nesxhanti. Sibangani?

Angithi uyena nje owayevel afike la etafuleni lami ecifela wonk umuntu wesfazane la ogqok isigqebhe, nalama legging akhalanayo ingaphambili yomuzw esholo phansi ufeleba mmmmm ngath inkomo endlanzeni ngoshay engath angimuzwa ngiqhubekele nokudayisela ama-customer.

Kwathi ngelinye ilanga wacela inumber komunye nje umanguba onezing ezishiphela le nezinkophe zokufakelwa owayezothenga. Kanti nami vele ngangingekho esmweni esihle ngalelolanga kusandakufika lamaphoyisa kamasipala angithathela zonk izinto zami nx! Nangu naye ubusy loskhotheni uloku egigitheka nalomanguba ngingazi ke noma sekuhleleka mina ngesehlakalo esingehlele.

(*Describing the incident:*) Sorry sisi ngakusiza?

(*As losisi:*) No ayi bengithi ngizothenga la nako ke sengizwa ngobhuti lo ukuthi angobuye ngibuye ngoba bekufike amaphoyisa ngase. Wase wabon ukuthi ukhophozelela lescaka kuzokusiza? Kungani ungayi kwelinye itafula mekuthi ubuzimisele ngokuthenga lento oyifunayo?

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

(As usisi:) Unenkinga yini sisi mengizincokolela nalobhuti? Uncinzekaphi ke wena ngoba besizikhulumela sodwa ungekho kwala la wena? Impeshwane lesikwenz ukuthi ukanukele amadoda abany abantu uyaktshela nje yena lobhuti wakhona ukuthi ungubaba weyngane zami, yii? Ngingenaphi mina lapho akusimina othe mungakwazi ukuqoqa indoda yakho ebese ubavumulela thina yini sisi unomona ngami hlampe? Ini? Weh msunu wa.

(Enactment) Ngyeke man ungbambelani ngiyeke ngishaye leskebereshe awungiyeye mus ukunginqanda. Kwakunjalo ke ukuba naloyamfana onguyise wabantwanabami njalo nje ngangihlezi ngisempini ngilwela yena kodwa yena lutho ukungihlonipha nokungazisa njengowesifazane ayephilisana naye.

(Sobbing) Wangizwis ubuhlungu yazi iiihhhi yaz abantu besilisa ave be. Yebo ufun ukuthenga?

(Change of tone) Hawu ngeke imali ehlangene kangaka ucabang ukuthi ngizowuthathaphi mina ushintshi? Awuzame kweliny itafula okuncono, awuzwa yini? Ngithe! Hamb ozama kwabanye man!

Come to think of weed, yoh, I miss smoking that stuff man. I would smoke and daydream about all my exes. Do you guys know of cases of the ex factor? Let me tell you. Some exes take it too far, like this one lady who went to the wedding of her ex without invitation. Posed as the make-up artist, knowing this bride and bridesmaids knew nothing about fashion trends or what's what. This lady ex messed the bride's make-up up like nobody's business.

When asked what kind of make-up was this, making the bride look like a glow-in-the-dark, she simply replied this type is an import fresh from overseas, and it's regarded as bad luck if the bride uses the mirror to check herself out before the groom sees her first. What a mess! Or maybe it was the perfect breakup revenge, you decide.

I, on one hand, might need to take a page or two from that example. My father's kids would dare to flirt in front of me as I'll be busy serving my customers. That buster would flirt with anything moving with a skirt. But he preferred those thick-in-the-jeans type. One of those buggers with fake eyelashes and too bright of mascara was here one day, flirting with one another. Just as I got attacked by the metro police who'd took away all my stock, so I wasn't in the right frame of mind, and so I served them my revenge best served cold. I blame myself though, coz if I hadn't shown weakness – for love does make you a weakling, ladies – I'd have been no pushover to that ex, loser of an excuse for a man.

Abantu angibazi ukuthi banjani umuntu umtshel okunye naye futhi ngiyalifaka uyalikhipha, heh bathong babazani! Kungani ningazifaneli nalama fruits engiwadayisayo? Mahle ngemibalabala yawo, amnandi futhi kawaphenduli isnomikanjani afuna nje ukuphathwa kahle kungenjalo azokubolela. Bheka nje ake ngenz umzekelo waleli olintshi nje. Linombala walo wodwa ongeke uthole kweziny ithelo ubona ngawo lombala oqhakambile futhi ukuthi selikulungele ukudliwa. Uma ulihluba ngaphakathi uthola amakhasi amaningi kukwena ke muthand ukudla lawo makhasi nomakunjalo angeke abamnandi njengo juice ongaphakathi mase usuqedile ukulihluba. Lo-juice oqavile uyasetshenziswa njengesithaku sokuqed ukoma, ukudesha amponjwana.

Liyakhanywa futhi igenge yentango miqed ukubhema, umsoco waso owehlesiphundu wenza emnandi iwashdown le ubabuze bazongifakazela nabo. Lona futhi leli olintshi liyaphenduka intuma njengebhola baligende abafana baligende lize litambe, litambe kuyothi sebeqedile ukuligenda bayobe sebelikhama oswayini. Ubuhle nomsoco walo sekwiwinto engasekho ke lapho sekuyazilengela nje loku okwi-olintshana bandla akusafunwa muntu. Yize kunjalo kodwa ikhasi lakhona lisaxhophana mfanwam lisukele ke wena, ihm.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

That's men for you, darling. Why not be like these fruits of mine? Like this orange. It's bright, orange colour is not found in other fruits. Its peel, when removed, brings tears to your eyes. If you like, you can eat the peel, or enjoy its succulent nectar juice that's also used as a drink mixer. Whether alcoholic or non-alcoholic, sun is hot, it's a beverage, just drink it. Even those nyapoes I spoke of earlier enjoy using the orange as a kick the ball in the street if they too broke to afford a soccer ball. Yeses, those nerdy nyaope heads messing up my oranges.

Ake sibheke ubanana ke manje. Njenge olintshi uma ubona uhlaza ulenga egatsheni lomvini uyawuyeka ulinde uze uvuthwe ube ilombala oyellow, iyellow bones. Ovuthiwe ubanana ufakwa kuma fruit salads, emishadweni yo-darkie ikhakhulazi wenziwa lento ekuthiwa itrifle (*ngokuzitshela*).

Ubanana ke lona usuphenduke itoyizi labanye ezithweni zabo zangasese okungamanyala ke as far as i'm concerned. Lavelelwa nalo ipipi selamataniswa ngezinto eziningi ezidliwayo iwors, ucarrot, ubanana yizona zonke lezinto ezumsangano zesimanjemanje ipipi-ipipi umthondo kwaphela nje. Where was I? Oh yes, qaphela ke ukuthi awuthathi kancane ubanana ngoba ungak'hhudisa ngabi ndaba zalutho wocela ukwehl eteksini ebheke emlazi isaku freeway ngyaktshela. Wobonakala udlul eSiphingo uhamba kancane no-jean oleng ishlama ulandelw impukane. Ngiyazi kahle lento engkhuluma ngayo yacishe yangehlela but ke yenzeka kwi friend yami asdlule lapho. All in all ngithi uyahlonishwa ubanana ngoba angeke uthande usubolile namacafazelo amnyama kuhle okwemilenze ye-yellow bone ne-cellulite.

Now, there's the banana. Oh wow, where do I begin? The banana is one of those things that has been compared to a penis. Some go as far as even using a banana as a penis. Can you imagine? Be careful of the banana, if not ripe enough, eat it and you'll shit on your pants. You'll jump off a taxi going to Umlazi at Isiphingo dragging your shitty self with green KFC flies following you all the way back home. It mustn't be too ripe, coz then now your banana won't be edible, looking like cellulite of your loose girlfriends who can't even pronounce banana.

Sesiza kuganandodo odleka uqinile njenge apula noma uthambile uyadleka kodwa amanzi. (*Emphasis:*) Uyazi ke nawe ukuthi into edliwayo mase inamanzi amaningi ayisabamnandi ishesh ikucike. Uyahlafuna la sekuyajuza ngcoliseka kwampahla oyigqokile manje, kahle kahle singasho nje ukuthi ubuye ukhipane eyntweni uganandodo. Uyasuthisa goh mukade usulambe kakhulu ngyazi ngoba ubabona kahle esitimeleni bayowuphanga bewuphange nakuya seziyaya useyahonq umuntu. Singeke sazi ke mhlambe uselaliswa ilenkonzo yabakwaShembe eyitimeleni. Hawu abayiscefe mase sebeqalile belanda-belanda yabona nje iyonanto eyangiyekisa ukugibela isitimela mina, iyona nje qha.

Look who we got now, the pear. Not much to say about this one, hey although there is this instant I recall back in the days of commuting the trains. The rand was low, way low. Notice how those big-bearded Shembe men after preaching a whole bloody boring sermon after eating a pear. How they just doze off to Nevernever land? Here's a tip. Wanna shut a boring man up? Give that man a Bells, I mean a pear. Eish, forgive me old habits.

Uma sesivala imizekelo yethu singakukhohlwa kanjani nje kodwa apula. Apula wena ubovu njenge valentine, ubovu njengombala wothando zonk ezinye ithelo zinomona ngawe ngoba akhekho ofana nawe no types like you apula. Apula ubuye ube isiqalekiso ngoba kungawe nje uEva walinga uAdam ensimini yaseEden.

Etshelwe kahle naye uAdam ukuthi angasithinti lesasthelo kodwa akalalelanga banjalo vese abantu besilisa abezwa, ikhanda ligcwel usimende. Egengeni yotshwala uhamba wedwa kumadeshi ngisho ngoba phela kwamfivilithi yami ikhandwe ngawe apula siyasho neskhango, 'It's dry but you can drink it'. Umuhle apula ngoba noma usushayekile waba nobubola obuncane usadleka sokuluma sithifele sikulume sithifele uze udleke. Kuzona zonk ithelo wena ungumakoya ngoba utshalwa umile manje ingakho ungezukulala kwi fruit pack yosomatekisi nabekontileka kuqala iapula, banana ne-olintshi mekusehlobo noMango. Amapula amabili ne-banana ijuicy ijuicy fruit imnandi weh weh!!! (*Starts singing and dancing*).

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Last but certainly not least, my favourite, the apple. Apple, yours is the colour for love. On Valentine's Day, on our lacey lingeries you know, wink, wink. You're in my favourite dry cider TV advert's slogan says 'It's dry but you can drink it.' But apple, it is through you and your cunningness that Eve tricked Adam in the garden of Eden. And even when, dear apple, you got rot on your sides, we bite, spit out. Bite, spit out, and enjoy you nonetheless.

Eish (*azibambe*) ngavele ngaphis omchamo iphi le-tissue weh aibo naku ngizozichamela (*runs off stage*). Ey awungyeka wena. (*Back on stage*). Ake nginibuze nake naya kulezindlu zangasese zomphakathi nafica izinto ezinyanyisayo naze nafisa ukungaphinde nibuyele kuzo for ukuzisebenzisa?

Manje nje ngiqeda kufica isbomboloji se-pad esifakwe phakathi etoilet ukona ubin kodwa. Ungaz umphikele umuntu ukuthi ubengazi ukuthi ayizuku-flusheka ebazi kahle. Mdala njalo lomuntu akusiyo ingane, weh bantu ake nginixwayise izinto ozaziyo ukuthi umkhuba ongasile hlukana nazo ngoba ngelinye ilanga uyozihlaza phambi kwabantu ngoba usuyijwayele awusaboni noma usufambulile.

Bheka nje ngiyangena lapha egumbini elincane iscabha sok'qala ubunuku bodwa kona nje ovele waphihliz isphihli sento waqeda washiya kanjalo. Ngangena kwesinye iscabha akufani kunok'hlanzeka nanku ususeduze nomchamo ngisathi ngithi qala-qala akuzindaba ezishaqisayo yemibalo eyindongweni naseschabheni ngisaba nokuzisho.

Nangu ke usis wabantu uyabona kuvaliwe kukhon umuntu usanesibindi sokungqongqoza ngaphendula ke mina yena ubelindeleni? Sengiqedile ke ngawasha izandla njengomuntu ophilayo angiyona lenhlobo efike ichame ishaye ne-fax eyePitoli ijike iphume ingen indlela ingaziwashanga izandla masihlangana nawe ithande kabi ukufuna ama-hug ninjalo niyathand ukuxhawulana. Uthini ke akhiph itissue afinye aze asidonse neskhwhelela nakuya (*holds out hand*) usefun umxhawule, sies! Nabesilisa abangakwazi ukuqondisisa bayageja mebechama ungazi noma lo-banana wakhe utshekile yini usezohazisa umchamo yonk indawo le, ngiyabazi phela ngangihlala nayo lenhlobo. Hawu ake nishoni baqhamukaphi labosisi abamemnyango we-toilet labesfazane bekudayisela bathi yini le. iRose water ugeza ngayo inanana emva kwalokho usumbambe ngqi ubae akasayindawo ubhekaminangedwa. Mina ngibona kuwukumosha iskhathi nje awumyeki ngani mengafuni ukuba nawe usungaze ulokumfakela izinto thizeni ukuze akuthande? Ay suka! Mina ngaze ngayeka kuyidayisa lezinto okwimpushwana eyellow noku-pink. Kwamali yakhona incane futhi kodwa iKuber yona ngisayimashisa (*looks away*).

Gosh, nature's calling, where's the tissue? Blocking here: back to act. People tell me, 'Why must women's public toilets be so disgusting?' From writings on the walls to used sanitary pads lying around and unsent faxed messages stuck in the toilets. If not that, there's some lady waiting by the door selling you heaven's waters that spring cleans your vagina and yellow, blue and pink powders. And iKuber.

I just want to relieve myself and wash my hands afterwards. So many people have no desire to wash their hands after using the loo. That type or group are the first to wanna hug you and shake your hands out of the blue. Some of you don't even know how to aim correctly. Pissing in all wrong directions or whipping out those crooked, skew bananas in public in broad daylight. We see you! Dilemmas of the public toilets is what I call them. I just want to relieve myself. I don't wanna feel like I'm going into Butterworth now.

Yazi nginok'hlala la etafuleni lami ngiyobabuka behla benyuka bephambana, ubona nje ukuthi lukhul usizi olubaliwe ebusweni. Omunye uzusol ukuthi ucwile shi ey'kweletini akasazi ephume kanjani. Omunye nobubi obungachazeki ubone nje ukuthi usefil isibhaxu umhlab umshaya usehamb efuna lakudayiswa kona intambo yokwilengisa. Kanti omunye umbone ukuthi wemuka nomoya akasazi noma liyashona noma liyaphuma. Omunye uyambon ukuthi sekusele kangaka zimshiye aqal acosh amaphepha. Untaz, untaza esekhuluma yedwa aze afe insini, azobuye aqalaqalaze.

Akhekho yini ombonayo mase akopolote amakhala (*describes*) bheka ke umunw emlonyeni. Ngathi kusenabanye abasahamba bencel ithupa emini ka-bha ngalowomzuzu akanandaba umbheresti ukuthi ubani ombukayo. Mekunje ayi nakimi amathe abuyel eshubeni kung'cacele sobala ukuthi singabantu sisenkingeni enkulu kodwa asiboni.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

I see strange things sometimes as people be walking up and down, others with not even a care in the world. So much so they'll even be digging their noses and eating at the same time. Another one, would be written depression all over their faces. So much so that if one of those guys selling that colourful rope, they'll take it and hang themselves. Not to mention the couples. Others pass by madly in love with each other, strolling pinky to pinky fingers, you'd swear they gonna start smooching each other like those Indian kids in the parks of Chatsworth. Meanwhile, other couples you'll see are on the brink of boiling point, like one of them is ready to strangle the other.

Haha! Mase kubakhona ikhokho mfanwami ezisebudlelwaneni kwezothando. Nginabisa kanjena ke lendaba yami ngoba hhey akuzimanga esizibonayo ezisishiya sibamb ongezansi. Ngamafushane nje kunento engangiphethe kahle. Lomkhuba owenziwa ingane zethu eziqabulana, zimangane bukhoma nasemabhasini zingasisukumeli, ziwuthathaphi? Sasijolela le thina buqamama ey'takomkweni ngoba sisaba ukubanjwa abazali. Lez'ezamanje ziyoncikisana ngemigqomo eyitolo zingabi nandaba ukuthi zibonwa obani. Sies!

Nenzis okwalama koola emapaki akoChatsworth. Zingagcini ngalokho k'phela lezinto lezi ziphinde zidoje ey'koleni usuyozibona nothayi ekhanda namabulukw atebisiwe, umhlola lo. Dingiswayo kababa mhlola muni lo? Usikilidi ke wona ophafuzwayo abafana amantombanzane kuzona zonk indawo lezi, ay mina ang'sazi mekunje.

Why ningazifaneli nezaguga ezithandanayo? Ave zi-cute yaz kona mase zitetoba ndawonye ziphum empeshenini sezidlul ngasematafuleni ethu kwazise phela ziyazifela ngo-banana amazinyo bakithi awasabonwa isini njena. Ungizwe kahle ke angikhulumi ngomntomyama la ngikhuluma ngezaguga zamandiya nabelungu. Futhi sengbone kahle ukuthi into-yethu le-umdala umncane kuyazifanela sinje thina bantu abamnyama.

(As man:) Awusheshe bo.

(Woman:) Ung'shiyelani?

(Man:) Shesha liqalil ibhola fun ukgoduka manje. Kunini ung'hambis idolobha lonke leli.

(Woman:) Angith uwena nje ongafuni ukudedela lemali yakho. Wigodlile ngoba naku wazi ukuthi uwena oholile namhlanje.

(Man:) Kunani pho? Wakhulumel imali yami engisebenzele kanzima nje? Akwanele ukuthi ngik'thengelile idilozi lakho ozligqoka emshadweni ngakhipha neye-grocer. Umgod ongagcwal wemfazi.

Why not be like those old white couples you see at the malls who still open up the doors for their partners? Or feed each other ice cream, you know, puppy love? Our kind have no TLC. What happened to opening the door for me?

You'll see them rushing each other off, arguing and airing their bedroom affairs for all to see and hear in broad daylight. Come on guys, we can change and become better couples, like the other grass on the other side of the fence. Who am I kidding? I think it's too late. What has this world come to? All these nice things and respect for each other as human beings has just gone out the window.

Sebeyohamba bethukana befokovisana indlela yonke ebhek elenki. Ngingazikhohlwa kanjani kodwa lezi zobulili ob'fanayo. Zimile ezimbili zesfazane zimi etafuleni, kuvele kudlule usisi ofake labo-jean abatight. Ngeskhathi enganakile lomunye esatheng iairtime nogwayi lomunye ajike aqalaze az akhoth indebe.

Bambambe, seziyosusana ke la manje seng'yokhuza khuzile ngize ngizixoshe: ey nina! Lalelani la hambani niyothethisana le ayi etafuleni lami. Imina yini eng'the aningakwazi ukuzibamba? Fanele phela angangaphela kanjani ama-brake niloku nihlohlene, hlohla, hlohla uk'hlohlohlo.

Aphiwe Namba

Babazile!

Wena? Ufun ukthini ke? Ne-freedom ebolile ekhanda esitshwamukel intenenkosi phakathi ngath iqhude elinethiwe. Whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever (*esho engekuzis ikhanda*). Hamb ogunda ichiskop njengesilisa. Sesobangisana ngey'buko, ama-weave, amadod ethu, ake nixoleleni please. Kanti wena uthi yini le yanghlukanisa nobaba weyngane zami? Wezw ichocolate box wayesebon ukuthi akabuy azoyizama lak'mina. Ngathi kuye- Out! Buyela lawuvela khona. Kudliwa icarrot cake (*ebeyikhomba*) lay'khaya. iChocolate box woyithola le kaSomizi. (*Says whuuuuu shem! njengoSomizi*).

Now we get same-sex couples. Lesbies that come with their bedroom affairs to my table. Bringing all their bad luck caused by friction on friction. I shout, 'Yey! Take your that time of the month emotions somewhere else. I'm running a business here.' What do I look like a gay bar?

Then comes your Somizis. Trouble. Only I can take my time in front of the mirror. How is it now that we got to fight over who looks more beautiful? Then one night, he came home and asks me for a chocolate box. I looked at that buster as if I wished I had a gun. I said, 'Look here you fool, in this house, we eat carrot and vanilla cake. Go to Somizi if you want chocolate. Voetsek.'

Blackout.



Penny Ngayo as Babazile
Photo: Aphiwe Namba

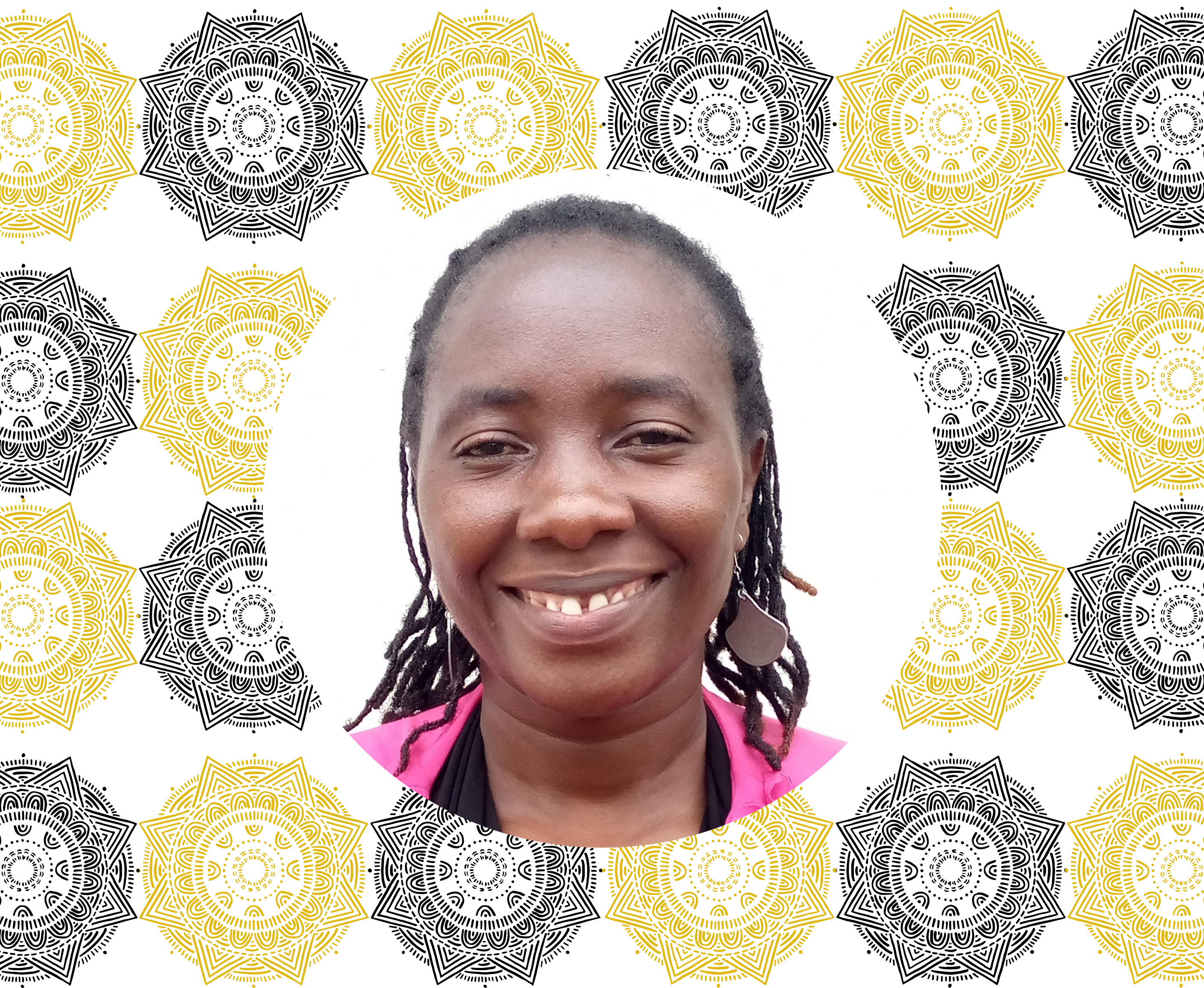
THE JOURNAL OF
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Translations



Agatha Tumwine



Agatha Tumwine is a lecturer at the Department of European and Oriental Languages, Makerere University, Uganda. She is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation PhD fellow in translation studies. Tumwine has a masters degree in French from the University of Artois. She is a practising conference interpreter and translator (French-English). Her research interests are translation, interpreting, and foreign and second language acquisition. Tumwine's doctoral research project is entitled "Losses and gains: A stylistic analysis of the translation process of folktales from Runyankore-Rukiga into French." Tumwine presents here her English and French translations of the short story "Akaibo kaza owa Nyamugarura" by J.F. Karwemera, originally written in Runyankore-Rukiga, a dialect native to Uganda. We first present Tumwine's notes and introduction to the translation. Tumwine can be contacted at agatumwine@gmail.com or atumwine@chuss.mak.ac.ug.

Introductory notes to the translations "One good turn deserves another" and "Un service en vaut un autre"

Agatha Tumwine

“Akaibo kaza owa Nyamugarura,” now translated as “One good turn deserves another” in English, and “Un service en vaut un autre” in French, is one of nineteen folktales originally written by J.F. Karwemera in Runyankore-Rukiga. Runyankore-Rukiga refers to two of the four dialects that form Runyakitara, together with Runyoro and Rutooro, a Bantu language spoken in the Western and South-Western regions of Uganda.

These folktales are contained in a book entitled *Shutama Nkuteekyerereze* [*Sit and I narrate to you*], first published in 1975. It is a historical book and includes nineteen folktales, forty-one idiomatic expressions, and over four hundred proverbs. They are characterized by imagery, graphical, syntactical, and lexical representations of Runyankore-Rukiga, depicting African contexts.

The original author, “Omugurusi” (The Old Man) Karwemera as he likes to be called, is now 95 years old. He was born in 1925 in Kabale District in South-Western Uganda. Karwemera has authored several books in Runyankore-Rukiga and is popularly known for advocating for the promotion of mother tongue learning and teaching in Uganda. In his active years, Omugurusi Karwemera served in different capacities as an educationalist (a classroom teacher and headteacher). He also served as a coordinator for the NGO Save the Children Fund for the Kigezi region in South-Western Uganda. He equally served on different district boards and committees in education contexts.

As a practising translator, I initially began translating from and into French and English thanks to the experience I acquired while working at the Centre for Language and Communication Services at Makerere University in Uganda. Later on, I started translating from Ugandan languages, including Runyankore-Rukiga and Rufumbira, into English. Runyankore-Rukiga and Rufumbira are my first and third languages, respectively. I was authorized by Omugurusi Karwemera to translate any of his works into English or French, and he has kindly allowed us to reproduce this original folktale here.

“Akaibo kaza owa Nyamugarura” is one of the six folktales I am studying for my doctoral research project entitled “Losses and gains: A stylistic analysis of the translation process of folktales from Runyankore-Rukiga into French”. I translated this particular folktale into English and French with the aim of conducting a comparative analysis between translating from Runyankore-Rukiga into French and into English. I encountered several challenges in this process, ranging from cultural to linguistic differences between the source and the target languages. I applied several translation procedures and strategies to counteract such difficulties. They have been compiled in my article, “Translating folktales from Runyankore-Rukiga into English and French: A comparative analysis of Karwemera’s ‘Akaibo kaza owa Nyamugarura.’”

These translations are written in a simple and ordinary language and register. Thus, they are easy to read, linguistically accessible, and not technical at all. This makes them suitable for language learning situations. The story depicts different values, particularly those of traditional African societies, summarized in the popular saying, “The evil you do remains with you, the good you do comes back to you,” which emphasizes the virtues of goodness, kindness and generosity.

This folktale can be used for any educational purposes. Anyone wishing to translate this text into other languages may do so, provided they acknowledge the original author and translator.

We now present the original story in Runyankore-Rukiga, followed by the two translations by Tumwine.

J.F. Karwemera



“Omugurusi” (The Old Man) Karwemera is now 95 years old. He was born in 1925 in Kabale District in South-Western Uganda. Karwemera has authored several books in Runyankore-Rukiga and for many years advocated for the use of mother tongue learning and teaching. We are excited to feature him in Jay Lit for this particular reason. African language learning and teaching must become an increasing priority in education systems. Karwemera served in different capacities as an educationalist (a classroom and head teacher). He served as a coordinator for the NGO Save the Children Fund for the Kigezi region in Uganda. He served on different district boards and committees in education contexts. Karwemera's original text can be found in a collection of folktales called Shutama Nkuteekyerereze, published in 1975. We gratefully thank Omugurusi for the use of his material for this valuable translation exercise and for allowing us to reproduce his original folktale here. Omugurusi, the youths of Africa are grateful for your many years of dedication to their education, for your folktales, and your continued involvement in their development! Webare munonga!

Akaibo kaza Owa Nyamugarura

The original text in Runyankore-Rukiga

Omu kyarokimwe hakagwamu enjara. Omukazi omwe yaarugayo yaaza kushakira eyi bwezire. Akahikira omu ka y’omushaija orikwetwa Kajumba. Muka Kajumba ku yaareebire ogwo mukazi, yaayekanga ahabwokuba akaba ajwaire kikazi kwonka ataine mabeere.

Ku baamazire kuramukanya, muka Kajumba yaamugira ati, “Shana ori ekyehindure?”

Omushaki ati, “Ahabwenki?” Muka Kajumba ati, “Ahabwokuba nindeeba ojwaire kikazi kwonka otaine mabeere; shana ori epa?”

Omushaki ati, “Tindi pa kureka amabeere gakabuzibwa okukuuhura, ahabwokuba owaitu hakagwayo enjara nyingi, nangwa nsigire abamwe nibaziika, manya muntu we buri amabeere gagirwa ohaagire.”

Omushaki agumizamu amugira ati, “Na mbwenu obu ndi aha nyizire kushaka, ku haraabe hariho eki oine ontambire!” (Obwe arikureeba omwezigye gw’oburo, n’entoto z’omugusha omu kibuga).

Muka Kajumba akaba ari omunyarwango; mpaho amugarukamu ati, “Timbiine shana oze kurondera ahandi.” Omushaki akwata ogw’eirembo agyenda naayenda kuteera omunwa ahansi, ekiniga kiri eky’okumubarura, ahabw’okumanya ku yaabimwima nkana.

Ku yaahikire omu gandi maka, bo baaba efura, bamwikiriza yaacwayo encuro. Ku yaaherize kukanyisa, baamukomera entanda yaataaha. Akashanga abaana na iba bari haihi kukaba kwonka baakizibwa ogwo mushakano.

Ku haabaire hahweireho ebyanda nka bibiri ow aba Kajumba nayo haagwayo enjara. Muka Kajumba nawe yaabura eky’okuta aha mahega, yaakwata omuhanda yaaza kushaka (Bagira ngu zaajweka rubi niikarujware), yaahikira aha kay a iba wa mukazi owu yaateereire enaku akanga kumucwisa encuro.

Akashanga ogwo mukazi naaseera ow’ekikaari, yaayetera aha irembo ati, “ Yaimwe aba kunu!”

Orubengo rukaba nirugamba, tiyaamuhurira. Muka Kajumba ku yaareebire haabura owaamugarukamu, yaafa kugyenda akuratiire eyi orubengo rurikugambira, yaashanga omukazi naasa, baaramukanya. Muka Kajumba taramanyire ku n’ori owu yaimire ebyokurya, ahabwokuba nawe mbwenuho akaba agomokire aine amabeere. Beitu ogwo mukazi we ku yaamwihire aha mutwe yaamuhisya aha bigyere, yaamumanya ku ni muka Kajumba.

Ku baaherize kuramukanya, omukazi yaajuumaarira orubengo rwe, yaatandika kurugambirira obwo arikurengyeza muka Kajumba ati, “Rukataaha, rukataaha, hoona n’owa Kajumba rukataahayo?”

Muka Kajumba we yaateekateeka ngu shana ni Kajumba arikweteranwa na iba, nikwo kumubuuza ati, “Imwe kunu Kajumba nimumumanyisibwa ki?”

Wa Mukazi ati, “Haza hoona hariho otarikumanya Kajumba?”

Mpaho muka Kajumba amugambira ku owaabo haagwireyo enjara, ku aizire kushaka. Wa mukazi amuha omutwe agumizamu n’akazino ke ati, “Rukataaha...” Muka Kajumba ku yahereirwe, yakwata omuhanda yaza kushakira ahandi kwonka arengyerera ku ugu mukazi naabaasa kuba ari omwe omu bu yaimire ebyokurya obu owaabo baabaire beerize.

Ahandi eyi yaagire kushakira tindikumanya yaaba aine eki yaaboineyo. Tiinye naahera haahera muka Kajumba n’omushaki.

One good turn deserves another

An English translation of J.F. Karwemera's "Akaibo kaza Owa Nyamugaruraby" by Agatha Tumwine

A long time ago, a village was hit by a terrible famine. One of the village women set out early in the morning in search of food elsewhere. She walked for miles and miles and finally reached another village. At the time, it was harvesting season. She was well-dressed, like any other female in their society, but her breasts had flattened, due to hunger.

The first home where she went belonged to the Kajumbas. At that moment, only Mrs Kajumba was at home. This strange-looking woman greeted Mrs Kajumba, but the latter looked at her with fear because of her physical appearance. She was as thin as a reed!

“Good heavens! You are so strange!” exclaimed Mrs Kajumba.

“Why?” asked the woman.

“I see you are dressed like a woman, but you have no breasts! You are so weird!” responded Mrs Kajumba.

Feeling embarrassed, the poor woman responded, “I am not weird my sister. My breasts shrunk because of hunger; that’s why they are not visible. Our village has been ravaged by a terrible famine, and as I talk now, people are dying of hunger!” explained the woman. “You know, even for breasts to be visible, one needs to have eaten and got satisfied,” she emphasized. “I am actually here searching for food. If you have something, kindly help me. Come to my aid!” she pleaded.

Apparently, it was a harvesting season as the compound was strewn with husks and pods of various foodstuffs, including millet, sorghum and beans. But Mrs Kajumba was such a mean woman that she could not imagine giving out a kilo of her foodstuffs. She told the poor woman, “We also don’t have anything. Maybe you go and try elsewhere, probably the neighbors further ahead.”

Worn out, and disappointed, the poor stranger woman went away seething and cursing under her breath, well knowing that Mrs Kajumba had intentionally refused to help her, despite the fact that she had plenty of food. She proceeded to the neighboring home. In contrast to the Kajumbas, at the next home she went to, she found wonderful, generous people. They were welcoming and hospitable. They let her work in exchange for the foodstuffs, as was the norm.

After she had earned enough for her family, they gave her the portions she deserved and she left. When she reached home, she found her husband and children on the verge of death due to hunger. However, their lives were saved thanks to the food she brought.

Many years later, the Kajumbas’ village was also hit by famine. It was Mrs Kajumba’s turn to go and look for food elsewhere. As the proverb goes, “*Zajweka rubi niikarujware*,” which means that the evil that you do comes after you. She walked for miles and miles until she reached a faraway village. And guess what! The very first home she went to was that of the strange-looking woman to whom she had refused to give food when they had a lot in stock. When she arrived, the woman was grinding sorghum inside the house, and she could not hear unless someone called out loudly.

“Hello! Anybody home?” Mrs Kajumba shouted. The lady still could not hear. Mrs Kajumba followed the sound of the grinding stone and found the woman inside. She greeted her, but Mrs Kajumba did not realize that it was the same lady to whom she refused to give food when she was in need. She had put on weight, and her breasts were now visible.

On the other hand, having looked at the visitor from head to toe, the woman recognized Mrs Kajumba. The former ignored the latter and continued with the grinding of her sorghum while singing and indirectly mocking Mrs Kajumba, singing, “Oh! It has struck, it has struck hard! It has struck even the Kajumbas?”

Mrs Kajumba imagined that it could be another Kajumba who shares the name with her husband. So she asked her, “Ah! You people do also know Kajumba?”

One good turn deserves another

An English translation of J.F. Karwemera's "Akaibo kaza Owa Nyamugaruraby"
by Agatha Tumwine

“Kajumba is so famous! Who does not know Kajumba?” she replied satirically.

Mrs Kajumba started narrating how their village had been hit by famine and that she had come to that village looking for food from any sympathizer. The woman ignored her and continued mocking her indirectly with her popular grinding song, “Oh! It has struck, it has struck hard! It has struck even the Kajumbas?”

Realizing that she was never going to get any aid, Mrs Kajumba went away. She, however, suspected that this could have been the woman she refused to assist with food when they had so much in their village. Shamefully and regretfully, she went away to try elsewhere.

True to the moral of the story, “One good turn deserves another.”

Un service en vaut un autre

A French translation of "Akaibo kaza Owa Nyamugaruraby" by Agatha Tumwine

Jadis, un village lointain a été ravagé par une famine terrible. Un jour, une femme habitante de ce village décida d'aller chercher à manger ailleurs. Elle se leva de bonne heure et elle marcha des centaines de kilomètres. Elle arriva enfin dans un village en saison des récoltes. La première famille où elle est allée, c'était la maison des Kajumba. A la maison, elle trouva Madame Kajumba. A cause de la faim, la femme étrangère était maigre comme un fil; elle était si maigre que ses seins étaient invisibles.

Quand Madame Kajumba la vit, elle était stupéfaite, du fait que cet être s'était habillée à la féminine alors qu'elle n'avait pas de seins comme les autres femmes. Tout de suite, la femme la salua.

Puis Madame Kajumba lui demanda, « Hein! madame, vous êtes normale? »

« Pourquoi? » demanda la femme.

« Parce que je vois que vous vous habillez comme les femmes, mais vous n'avez point de poitrine! Qu'est-ce qui est vous est arrivé? » demanda Madame Kajumba.

« Madame, ce n'est pas que je n'ai point de poitrine. Mes seins sont invisibles à cause de la faim, » répondit la femme. « Notre village a été ravagé par la famine. A l'heure actuelle, les gens sont en train de mourir à cause de la faim! » confirma la femme. « Vous savez, pour grossir, on doit manger. Sinon, si on est affamée, même la poitrine disparaît, » a-t-elle éclairci.

« Au fait, je suis venue à la recherche de la nourriture. Si vous avez quelque chose, vous pouvez m'aider avec quelques denrées alimentaires, » supplia la femme.

Madame Kajumba était si avare qu'elle ne pourrait rien céder. Elle dit donc à l'étrangère: « Nous n'avons rien. Vous pouvez peut-être aller chercher ailleurs. »

Et pourtant, il y avait des cosses de mil, de sorgho, de pois et de maïs partout dans la cour. Très fâchée, la pauvre femme s'en alla pour aller chercher ailleurs dans le voisinage sachant pourtant que Madame Kajumba avait refusé de lui donner les denrées alimentaires malgré toute l'abondance visible.

Elle continua à la maison voisine. Là, elle était bien accueillie. Les gens de cette famille étaient chaleureux, gentils et généreux. Ils demandèrent à la femme de travailler pour les denrées alimentaires comme c'était la coutume. Quand elle avait travaillé pour assez de nourriture, on lui donna toutes sortes d'aliments et elle rentra chez elle. Quand elle arriva chez elle, elle trouva son mari et ses enfants sur le point de mourir. Leur vie fut ressuscitée par la nourriture apportée par la maman.

Des années passèrent et la famine ravagea le village des Kajumba. Cette fois-ci, les Kajumba, eux aussi n'avaient rien à se mettre sous la dent. C'était le tour de Madame Kajumba d'aller chercher à manger ailleurs. Un jour, elle se leva de bonne heure et elle marcha des centaines de kilomètres. Elle arriva enfin dans un village lointain. Comme le dit le proverbe, « *Zaajweka rubi niikarujware* » (On finit toujours par payer les conséquences de ses actes). La toute première maison où elle est allée, c'était la maison de l'autre femme à qui elle avait refusé de donner à manger lors qu'elle en avait en abondance.

Quand elle arriva à l'entrée, elle interpella: « Y a-t-il des gens dedans? La maison est vide? »

Entre temps, la femme de la maison était en train de moudre du sorgho sur la pierre meulière et elle ne pourrait pas entendre à cause du bruit de la meule. Etant donné que personne ne répondait, Madame Kajumba a décidé d'entrer dans la maison et elle trouva une femme en train de moudre. Elles se sont saluées.

Mais Madame Kajumba ne s'est pas rendue compte que c'était la femme à qui elle avait refusé de donner à manger. Celle-ci avait pris du poids, elle avait la poitrine, ainsi, les seins étaient bien visibles. Par contre, la femme regarda Madame Kajumba de la tête aux pieds et la reconnut. Alors, Madame Kajumba raconta son histoire s'agissant de la quête de la nourriture car leur village avait été ravagé par la famine. En se moquant de la fameuse Madame Kajumba, et en se demandant si c'est possible qu'il peut y avoir la famine chez les Kajumba, la « Pauvre, » femme continua à moudre en chantant un chant poétique et ironique.

« Rukataaha, rukataaha, hoona n'owa Kajumba rukataahayo? » qui peut se traduire.

« Elle a frappé fort! Elle a frappé plus fort! Est-il possible qu'elle a même frappé chez les Kajumba! »

Mais Madame s'imagina que l'on parle d'un autre Kajumba qui partage le même nom avec son mari. Alors, elle demanda à la femme:

« Vous aussi, vous connaissez Monsieur Kajumba? »

Une photo d'une femme africaine moulant du mil sur une pierre meulière.

« Est-ce qu'il y a quelqu'un qui ne connaît pas Kajumba? » satiriquement répondit la femme. Madame Kajumba continua à raconter ses histoires de la famine qui avait ravagé leur famille et que c'était pour cette raison qu'elle était venue chercher à manger. Faisant semblant de ne pas entendre, la femme continua à moudre en chantant la fameuse chanson:

« Elle a frappé fort! Elle a frappé plus fort! Elle a même frappé chez les Kajumba! »

N'ayant pas eu de réponse, et avec la honte aux yeux, Madame Kajumba décida d'aller chercher ailleurs tout en sachant que cette femme pourrait être la même femme à laquelle elle a refusé à donner la nourriture lorsqu'elle en avait en abondance.

C'est pourquoi on dit qu'un service en vaut un autre!



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Contact

Cell: +27 72 894 7191

Email: africanyouthliterature@gmail.com

Website: africanyouthliterature.art.blog

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